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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 4 April 2006

Mardi 4 avril 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 4 April 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 4 avril 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KAYLA CORNALE

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I rise today to congratulate Kayla Marie Cornale, a 16-year-old student at Assumption high school in Burlington. For the second year in a row, Kayla has won numerous awards for her research into autism and the program she has developed to teach autistic children. Working with her nine-year-old cousin, Kayla quickly recognized a strong musical talent, common to autistic children, and devised a teaching system based on musical notes played from a piano. Through this, she has successfully taught the entire alphabet, emotions such as happiness and fear, and basic nouns, verbs and adjectives.

Kayla's project, Sounds into Syllables, has won far too many awards to name in the last two years of its development; however, I would like to highlight that she won the 2005 Intel Foundation achievement award, the American Intellectual Property Law Association award and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association award at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Phoenix, Arizona. Kayla will be returning to the science and engineering fair again this year as part of Team Canada to compete with her updated research.

It should also be mentioned that Kayla developed her own computer software to assist in the teaching process and received Bell Canada's computer and communications award and Dofasco's information systems award as a result.

In a province where parents of autistic children feel that the McGuinty government has all but turned its back on their children, Kayla Cornale's love, compassion and innovation are a beacon of hope and a breath of fresh air.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to acknowledge Peel region's newest addition: its integrated waste management plant, located in my own riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. This new plant boasts a single-stream material recovery unit, equipped with the latest sorting technology that can separate recyclable materials

right at the plant, making recycling even easier for all Peel region residents.

Residents will no longer have to separate their recyclable items into a blue box or a grey box; the plant does all the work for them. I'm confident that this latest in sorting technology will foster an environment of recycling and, even better yet, encourage those not already in recycling mode to do their part.

I would also like to take this opportunity to applaud the efforts of the new plant's many dedicated staff, who devote their time and lives to helping ensure our environmental well-being in the years to come.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I rise to express concern about the dangerous political game played yesterday by the Minister of Tourism and the member for Niagara Falls. In a set-up question designed to divert attention from the McGuinty Liberal government's bloating of the bureaucracy—7,200 new employees listed in the government phone book and a 20% increase in those being paid more than \$100,000—the minister attacked Prime Minister Harper for his honesty on the issue of the United States requiring passports for entry and re-entry to their country.

The minister's ploy may have drawn in the media, but it is a short-term and short-sighted game the Liberal government is playing, with potentially long-term effects. No one has done more to alienate Americans than representatives of the Liberal Party, and those personal and frequently mean-spirited attacks have been widely reported in the United States. I've personally had American citizens ask me why Canadians hate Americans.

At the end of the day, it is the two federal governments that will resolve this situation, and I remain optimistic that it will be resolved. As someone with two international border crossings in my riding, I implore the McGuinty Liberal government to stop playing political games with this critically important issue and work with the new federal government toward a resolution that addresses the needs of both countries.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Last Friday, I was pleased to participate in a lobby organized by family and resident councils from five long-term-care homes in Sudbury and area. I was given petitions signed by

hundreds of residents, family members and friends who are very concerned that underfunding of Ontario's long-term-care homes is having a negative impact on residents, many of whom are frail, vulnerable and require more care.

Their message was simple: Residents and family members want this government to fund 20 minutes more of hands-on care per resident per day. Despite their very best efforts, staff at the homes aren't able to meet all the needs because there aren't enough of them to do what needs to be done. More staff means more care that residents need and deserve.

It's frustrating for residents and their families to have to sign petitions to urge the government to act on the situation. After all, in the last election, the Liberals promised to "invest in better nursing care, providing an additional \$6,000 in care for every resident." But as revealed by the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, the fact is that the government has only increased care funding per resident by \$2,000 per year. In its third budget, with a \$3-billion windfall, the McGuinty government should have done much more.

Secondly, the Liberals also promised "to reinstate the standards of care, including a minimum 2.25 hours of nursing care daily." The Liberals have failed to reinstate 2.25 hours of nursing care; in fact, they haven't implemented any minimum standard of care. There is no bottom line regarding how much care a resident is entitled to receive every day.

The Liberals made big promises to long-term-care residents and their families. In this third budget, they should have delivered on them.

HOCKEYVILLE 2006

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I am pleased to be able to speak to the House today and throw my full support behind my hometown, Peterborough, in its attempt to become Hockeyville Canada 2006. Hockeyville Canada is a nationwide initiative and competition produced by the CBC and Kraft Canada. The winning community will receive money for an arena upgrade, as well as funds for new equipment and, most excitingly, will play host to an NHL preseason game.

Peterborough quickly received a petition with some 23,000 supportive signatures. Following in the Peterborough tradition, a grassroots committee organized by Dr. Bob Neville has recently carried Peterborough into the next round with some 50 other communities.

Peterborough is steeped in a rich hockey tradition. Our hometown heroes, the Peterborough Petes, recently celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2005, and this year have advanced to the eastern conference semifinals against the Sudbury Wolves. Since their inaugural season in 1956, the Petes have been to the Memorial Cup eight times and have a long list of NHL representatives, including Bob Gainey, Steve Larmer, Cory Stillman, Mike Ricci, Larry Murphy, Doug Jarvis, and coaches Scotty Bowman and the late Roger Neilson.

Furthermore, Peterborough held its first old-timer tournament and was host to the 1996 Memorial Cup, and this year is hosting the 48th annual Liftlock Atom Hockey Tournament for girls and boys, which attracts up to 500 volunteers.

Beyond any doubt, I believe the people of Peterborough deserve to be the host of Hockeyville 2006. Hockey is undeniably Canadian, and Peterborough is undeniably Hockeyville. Let's help bring NHL hockey to the Memorial Centre, and let's bring Hockeyville to Peterborough.

1340

HYDRO ONE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I rise today to question how this government can justify the salary of CEO Tom Parkinson of Hydro One Networks Inc.

Every week, my constituency offices receive calls from residents who are struggling to cope with existing hydro bills after the last round of rate increases. Now those same constituents have been told to expect another increase. People in northern and rural Ontario pay some of the highest delivery charges in the province and receive the poorest of service.

Essential forest management and infrastructure improvements to ensure reliable energy to customers appear to be at the expense of outrageous salaries and bonuses to management and staff at Hydro One. This winter in particular Hydro One customers in the Parry Sound region were particularly hard hit, as were residents in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. They were without power on numerous occasions for many hours on end.

In the past, I have heard from dairy farmers, abattoirs, restaurants, homeowners and businesses about the impact of power outages and the loss of business, to say nothing of the inconvenience. The community of Yearley has been tracking outages over the past several years in an effort to obtain better service. While the number of outages this year is significantly lower, the number of hours without service was up significantly—160% to be exact. Compared to details Hydro One reported in March 2004, there has been no improvement in service.

How does the government justify Mr. Parkinson's \$702,000 in bonus and other perks? People in my riding would certainly like to know what performance targets and service improvements they can look forward to as a result of Mr. Parkinson's leadership of Hydro One.

CRIME PREVENTION

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): The Hug of Thanks extended to the Attorney General, Michael Bryant, from Mary Pocius, president of the downtown business improvement area, last Tuesday in Hamilton was a symbolic display of appreciation felt by the people of Hamilton for his courage and leadership demonstrated by the unprecedented use of the Civil Remedies Act.

This act allowed the province to foreclose on the owners of a building that had a notorious reputation as a crack house. It had also been the scene of two alleged cocaine-related murders. This building, called the Sandbar, known as the Corporation, as quoted by the Hamilton Spectator, was a place where anyone could buy crack from people working in shifts in a sophisticated criminal network.

I want to thank Minister Bryant for closing down 193 King Street East. Hamilton has been working toward a new revitalized downtown where citizens feel safe walking downtown and supporting our local businesses and community. Our heartfelt thanks also go to the men and women of the Hamilton Police Service, under the able direction of Chief Mullan, who have been struggling with the various occupants of this nasty building. Also present last Tuesday, offering his support, was Councillor Bernie Morelli, chair of our police services and a stalwart Hamiltonian.

Police say that in 2002, 100% of bank robberies, 95% of variety store robberies and 65% of break and enters in Hamilton were tied to crack cocaine. It was also stated that despite the searches, despite the seizures and despite the numerous deaths, this ugly operation kept going until early March, when Attorney General Bryant came in and shut it down. A big vote of thanks—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

BORDER SECURITY

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): As the member for Sarnia–Lambton, a riding which borders the United States, I was surprised to learn that our new Prime Minister, Mr. Harper, has decided to surrender on the issue of implementing mandatory new identification cards for travellers.

On both sides of the Canada-US border, politicians, business people and travellers have recognized how counterproductive this move will be, and we will continue to actively oppose this decision. Millions, if not billions of dollars worth of trade will be lost by both sides if this plan becomes a reality.

We have reaped many economic benefits having good and easy access between Canada and the United States, so I was disappointed that after so many years of positive integration and trust between our nations, Mr. Harper and Mr. Bush have decided to throw good sense out the window and take a step backwards. This step is not in the best interests of Ontario.

I urge Mr. Tory and the opposition to press their Conservative counterparts in Ottawa on this issue on behalf of the best interests of Ontarians.

RABBI LAWRENCE ENGLANDER

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's an honour to rise today to recognize a great Ontarian who has worked tirelessly to strengthen the social fabric of the city of Mississauga. Rabbi Lawrence Englander, or

Larry, to his friends, of the Solel Congregation in Mississauga joins us today in the west gallery.

Rabbi Englander's long list of achievements will inspire all in this House. A spiritual leader of the Solel Congregation, Rabbi Englander and his congregation have sponsored refugee families, including one at present from Burundi; have established an interfaith food bank; and have launched a breakfast club for children. He also joined forces with other concerned partners to form a street patrol that delivers warm blankets and food to less fortunate families in Mississauga.

Rabbi Englander initiated meetings with two other congregations to help provide housing for families in need. Today, thanks to Rabbi Englander, 500 low-income families have a place known as Pathway to call home.

In 2005, the Governor General of Canada conferred upon Rabbi Englander the Order of Canada.

I invite my colleagues to join me in recognizing Rabbi Lawrence Englander and all his contributions to Canada, Ontario and the city of Mississauga, which is so proud of him.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY 406

TO PORT COLBORNE ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR L'AUTOROUTE 406

MENANT À PORT COLBORNE

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to extend Highway 406 to Port Colborne / Projet de loi 87, Loi prolongeant l'autoroute 406 jusqu'à Port Colborne.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I want to thank Port Colborne Mayor Ron Bodner, Niagara region Chair Peter Partington and Councillor Bob Saracino, and David Barrick, president of Port Colborne-Wainfleet Chamber of Commerce, for their support and advice on this bill.

The government has recently indicated that their intention was to extend Highway 406, through Highway 58, into Port Colborne. This runs against the preferences of the city of Welland, Port Colborne and other area municipalities. This bill would correct that by designating Highway 140 as part of Highway 406, not Highway 58.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on

Tuesday, April 4, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion 89. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Speaker: All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Peterson, Tim
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hudak, Tim	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jackson, Cameron	Ramsay, David
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Scott, Laurie
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Martiniuk, Gerry	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	Matthews, Deborah	Tascona, Joseph N.
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Tory, John
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	
Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley	
Klees, Frank	Murdoch, Bill	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 73; the nays are 10.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOREWAY DRIVE GENERATING STATION

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to share with you and our colleagues in the House today that Ontario is one step closer to a cleaner, more secure energy future.

I, along with my colleagues from Brampton–Gore–Malton–Springdale and Brampton Centre, had the honour of taking part in the launch of construction of Sithe

Global Power's Goreway Drive generating station in Brampton.

At this time, I would like to welcome, in our gallery today, Dave Foley, from Blackstone, and Duane Cramer, vice-president of Sithe Global Power. Welcome to the House, gentlemen.

When it is completed, the Goreway Drive facility will be capable of producing 875 megawatts of electricity, enough power for 330,000 homes. The privately funded plant will cost about \$1 billion and be constructed in two phases. The first phase will provide 500 megawatts of electricity by the summer of 2007, and the remaining 375 megawatts will be ready by the summer of 2008. It will easily be one of the largest combined-cycle natural gas generating stations in Canada.

1400

The Sithe plant is being built to meet our directive to the Ontario Power Authority, asking that they address the vital need for electricity in the western part of the greater Toronto area. It is also an important part of our plan to close all the coal-fired generating stations in Ontario and replace them with cleaner sources of electricity. As members know, the Lakeview coal-fired plant in south Mississauga closed in April 2005. It was among the largest polluters in the greater Toronto area.

Our government is building a new energy future that will keep the lights on and ensure that our children have cleaner air. This facility and others being built in the Sarnia region and in other parts of the province will allow us to maintain a stable supply of clean power while closing down our dirty coal-fired generating stations.

Since taking office in 2003, over 2,800 megawatts have come online, and there are more than 11,000 megawatts that are being built. To put this in perspective, there is no other Canadian province or US state that will build more new generation capacity than Ontario over the next five years.

As we renew Ontario's energy system, we are embarking on one of the largest, most comprehensive building initiatives since Sir Adam Beck was running Hydro. These projects have included building wind farms across Ontario and bringing nuclear units back online. They have included the construction of new gas plants, like Sithe Goreway, and launching comprehensive conservation and demand management initiatives that will invest up to \$1.5 billion in energy conservation. They include a commitment to new renewable energy, with 18 new renewable energy projects that will add more than 1,350 megawatts of clean energy to the system by 2008, and one of the most ambitious and forward-looking standard-offer contract programs in North America.

Today's launch of construction of the Sithe Goreway generating station is indeed good news for our province, and it is one more indication that we are moving forward toward a bright energy future for our province.

JEAN LOWERY

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I rise with deep regret today to mark

the passing of a nursing pioneer. Her name was Jean Lowery, and she spent 40 years devoting her skills and energy to the care and well-being of patients and also of nurses.

As my colleagues know, the profession of nursing has not always received the recognition and respect that it deserves. Ms. Lowery set to work on that. She graduated from the University of Toronto School of Nursing in 1957. She took up a profession whose practitioners, people dedicating their lives to caring for others, were themselves not cared for very much at all. Nurses were underpaid, they were undervalued, they were overworked and they didn't come close to receiving the respect that they should have. Jean Lowery didn't like that; she thought it was wrong. She thought nurses deserved better, and she began a decades-long battle to see to it that they received better.

In 1973, she was one of a number of nurses who met in Toronto to form the Ontario Nurses' Association. She was installed at that meeting as ONA's first president. She served the association in many capacities until her retirement in 1991, at which time she was awarded an honorary membership. Jean Lowery came to embody the ONA vision, which is, "Respected. Strong. United. Committed to members who care for people."

Speaker, because of people like Jean Lowery, whose commitment never wavered, nurses can proudly claim to be respected, to be strong and to be united. They are, as they have always been, the heart and soul of health care. Today, they are recognized as such, which is something that they have not always been. Thousands of nurses have benefited from the efforts made and the example set by Jean Lowery. As a result of that, hundreds and thousands of patients have as well.

Nursing is a profession that, especially early on, decidedly, desperately needed a champion. In this province, Jean Lowery was that champion. Our hearts go out to her family and her many friends and admirers, and we stand in mourning with the thousands of nurses in Ontario whose professional lives have been improved by the tireless efforts and the extraordinary commitment of Jean Lowery, a great Ontarian.

GOREWAY DRIVE GENERATING STATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I'm pleased to respond to the minister's statement today. They made this announcement in October 2005, and we're finally getting to the point where we're actually putting a shovel into dirt. It's typical of how this government has operated. First they botched what was going on in Mississauga and Brampton. They signed contracts and made deals with Eastern Power. The place went bankrupt. One was cancelled. But every day, the clock keeps ticking on the critical supply shortage here in Ontario. So they basically had to start over with the Sithe project.

Look, we're pleased that we're going to have some additional power in Ontario. The question is whether or

not it is going to satisfy the needs that we have, because the bigger question remains, and that is the question of supply in this province. They keep talking, but they're not quite so pompous about it. They keep talking about the shutdown of the fossil fuel plants, but even they alluded, in their budget, to backtracking on that a little bit, because everybody knows they cannot fulfill those promises. They should stop dreaming and put a knife through that promise, because it is dead, and the people of province have to know that.

You know what else they have to know? They have to know, and they have a right to know, what this plan of the Liberal government is going to cost them with regard to electricity in this province, not only in the near future but in the long term. The minister tried to lay that groundwork a little bit yesterday with a lowball question from one of her colleagues with regard to other jurisdictions. We need to know. Some estimates are saying that this government's electricity plan will cost tens of billions of dollars over the next 25 years with regard to generation costs in this province, because of a silly, irresponsible promise that they knew was bad in 2003.

My position to the minister is, they have to come clean. They are talking about clean energy. It is time that they came clean with respect to energy in this province. It's great to hear an announcement, but it's just an announcement. Now they're saying that in the summer of 2007 this place will be generating electricity. If it is like every other Liberal announcement and promise, I think the people would view that skeptically. So we will wait and see whether or not this will actually be working by that time. But in the meantime, Minister, and to the Premier, it is time to level with the people.

What are the fixed-price contracts for these plants? What is the cost? How much are you going to be paying those people when they are sitting idle, and how much will you be paying for power when it's producing? The people have a right to know. You talk about transparency. That's a load of you know what—something that could be burned as biomass maybe. It's time that they came clean with the province of Ontario, which needs to know what the real cost of power is under your plan.

JEAN LOWERY

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to respond today to the statement of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on the passing of Jean Lowery, RN. Jean Lowery was the founding president of the ONA, the union that today represents 51,000 RNs and allied health professionals across Ontario. She spent 40 years of her life devoting her skills and energy to the care and well-being of patients and also of nurses. The ONA vision today is rooted from her: "Respected. Strong. United. Committed to members who care for people." To quote the ONA president, Linda Haslam-Stroud, Mrs. Lowery was a pioneer and champion of better working conditions for nurses: "She didn't like the lack of respect

afforded nurses in the 1950s and '60s and dedicated her professional life to effect change.”

I myself am an RN who graduated in the 1980s and came into a system that had seen a lot of revision. I have nurses in my family, and they've told stories of when they first started nursing in the 1950s and 1960s. Mrs. Lowery was critical in increasing the respectability of the profession that we have today. Nurses were underpaid, undervalued, overworked and didn't receive respect. There are still some issues today in the nursing profession, but she united nurses and we are still moving forward on the changes.

As most of you know, if there are any nurses in your families, they have taken care of you at one point or another. They are certainly the front-line advocates for patients, and we need to support them.

On behalf of John Tory and the Progressive Conservative caucus, we send condolences to Mrs. Lowery's family. A true friend to nursing she was.

1410

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): New Democrats join with many others today in acknowledging the contribution that was made by Jean Lowery to the nursing profession here in Ontario. Her whole life was devoted to nursing: her skills, her talents, her expertise. She graduated as a psychiatric nurse in 1951 and then went on to receive her public health certificate from the University of Toronto in 1957, so her skills were varied and her contribution and commitment were great.

Secondly, it was her experience on the front line and the conversations she had with other nurses who were very unhappy with their work, their hours of work, their low pay and their lack of prestige that compelled her to take up the challenge to improve the lives of Ontario nurses. As a consequence, she was a founding member of ONA. When that group came together in 1973 to begin collective bargaining on behalf of nurses, she was installed at that meeting as ONA's first president. She also made many other contributions to ONA later in her life. She served on ONA's staff until her retirement in 1991. She was the director of human resources and the director of association services. She was an employment relations officer who worked directly with front-line nurses in labour relations matters.

I want to quote two of her colleagues, who said the following. Lesley Bell: “When attempts to work with management to set standards failed, she and others decided that collective bargaining was the answer. Thousands of RNs have benefited from her efforts” since that time. And this by Linda Haslam-Stroud: “Jean Lowery worked tirelessly to make things better for RNs. She didn't like the lack of respect afforded nurses in the 1950s and '60s and dedicated her professional life to effect change.” That she certainly did.

On behalf of all New Democrats, we acknowledge and thank Jean Lowery for the amazing contribution she made, but we also extend our very sincere sympathy and condolences to her lifetime partner, Fred, her daughter, Marylin, and her son, Paul. She will be missed.

GOREWAY DRIVE GENERATING STATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to respond to the Minister of Energy, and I want to respond to the things that weren't in today's announcement. That's what is most interesting about this.

You see, if you roll back the clock, Dalton McGuinty promised the people of Ontario public power. In fact, he said during the election campaign that the electricity market is dead. Now, people across Ontario might be led to believe by that statement that what was announced today is public power. If they did believe that, they would be sadly mistaken. This is private, profit-driven power, and as such it's going to be very expensive power.

In fact, that's one of the other salient things that isn't in this announcement. Nowhere is the McGuinty government prepared to talk about, even whisper about, what this is going to cost the people of Ontario on their hydro bills. Is it going to be 10-cent-a-kilowatt-hour electricity? Is it going to be 11-cent-a-kilowatt-hour electricity? The McGuinty government won't say. But I think we can discern a couple of things by looking at the history of this transaction, because when this was first announced with much fanfare by the McGuinty government back on May 30, 2005, a year ago, the McGuinty government then talked about how these were going to be two plants in Mississauga, one for 280 megawatts on Hurontario Street, and 280 megawatts on Loreland Avenue. At the time, they ventured to say that they thought the electricity would cost 7.8 cents per kilowatt hour.

Well, that would have been expensive, but you see, that deal that was announced with much fanfare by the McGuinty government fell apart. After much boasting that this was an open process and that there was a fairness commissioner, that deal fell apart. So what was announced today is in fact a hurry-up-quick fixer-upper. It doesn't have in it a reference to price, but I'm willing to bet for the consumers of Ontario that when this appears on the hydro bill, people will be looking at 10 cents or 11 cents a kilowatt hour for their electricity. That's what's going on here. People need to know what this deal is really all about.

VISITORS

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm very pleased, and I know all members of the House will join me, to introduce the president of Chrysler Canada, who has joined us in the members' gallery. We ask him to stand. Steve Landry is here today. Welcome to the House. I'm also very happy to introduce Lori Shalhoub, also with Chrysler Canada, and Doug Jure—able representatives for Chrysler Canada. We're very pleased that the headquarters, of course, is in Windsor, Ontario.

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like all members of the House to join me in welcoming the Tuesday women's luncheon club to our chamber today. Welcome, and we're glad to have you here.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm pleased to recognize in the gallery two individuals who lived in Ottawa, used to live in my colleague Madeleine Meilleur's riding, and are now in Stratford: Eric and Gillian Adams. Welcome.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm happy my constituents are here, Eric and Gillian. I'm also very happy that my oldest brother, Bill, is joining us here today.

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It is my privilege to introduce two people who are making a huge contribution to the remediation of landfills by allowing us to take plastic out of landfills and putting in paper bags so that we don't create leachate and so that we can take the dry and wet organic waste and turn it into compost: the inventor of the technology, Mr. George Colgan, and the financier of the technology, Mr. Lou Meehan. Will you please stand and be acknowledged.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like the House to pay appropriate regard to a constituent of mine who's here today: Mr. John Tory.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to say hello to my mother, who's watching by television. Hi, Mom.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I knew there was a reason for these points of order not being points of order. Thank you very much to everyone.

DEFERRED VOTES

2006 ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We now have a deferred vote on Mr. Tory's amendment to the budget motion.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1418 to 1423.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr. Tory's amendment to the motion, please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arnot, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Hampton, Howard	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	Tory, John
Hudak, Tim	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Jackson, Cameron	O'Toole, John	
Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Racco, Mario G.
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Hariinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 25; the nays are 66.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

We now come to the motion of Mr. Duncan, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1427 to 1432.

The Speaker: Those in favour of the motion by Mr. Duncan will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kennedy, Gerard	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Cordiano, Joseph	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Craitor, Kim	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Hariinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Hampton, Howard	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	Tory, John
Hudak, Tim	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Jackson, Cameron	O'Toole, John	
Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 67; the nays are 25.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

ORAL QUESTIONS**HYDRO ONE**

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Could you please explain to us here and to the public what the criteria and the evaluation measures were that resulted in a bonus payment to the chief executive officer of Hydro One of roughly \$500,000 for this year? Could you explain the criteria?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm going to refer this question to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the member for his question. As I indicated yesterday in the House, I think that it's fair. I've written to the various agencies to ask for a meeting.

As you know, executive salaries are set by the boards of all the agencies. I've asked for a meeting to sit down with them for their explanation, and I'm looking forward to doing that very shortly.

Mr. Tory: I say to the Premier that the government is the single shareholder and the owner of Hydro One, and having a meeting or writing a letter is not really necessary. All you need to do is hit the speed-dial button and ask the simple question, "What were the criteria on which this bonus was based?" It wouldn't take more than 10 minutes.

This is about simple accountability for the taxpayers of Ontario. All we want to know, and all the taxpayers are entitled to know, is the basis upon which the bonus was calculated and paid. It's written down. There's a written record of it right now—there should be.

When you award someone a bonus of this magnitude, it should be easily explained. I'm asking you, when this is in effect public money, will the Premier instruct the minister to come to this House tomorrow with the explanation as to the basis upon which that bonus was paid on behalf of the hydro ratepayers of Ontario? It shouldn't take longer than that. Will you do it?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question. I'm sure that the member recognizes that in fact

it was his party who actually set up the structure under which the boards do operate. They are independent, and it is their executive which determines their rates of compensation and the rates of bonuses.

What I have asked for is a meeting for an explanation, and that's fair. I've asked that from all of the agencies. I'm more than happy; I'm really quite prepared. As the member of the opposition has indicated, and I'll quote him, "You do have to pay the kind of money they would get somewhere else or you won't keep them," when referring to executives' salaries meeting the demands of the marketplace.

I agree with what he's saying. What I am also saying is that I'm quite prepared to sit down with the chair and the board, who have the responsibility for that determination, to understand how in fact they did make that determination in the first place.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: The quote of mine that you read is very interesting and it actually confirms what I was not asking you about, which is how much he was paid. What I was asking you about were the criteria pursuant to which he was paid. It's a very simple question. In fact, the payment in question was made months ago, pursuant to criteria that were probably established a year ago.

All I'm asking you is very simply—you don't need to have a meeting; you don't need to send a letter. You just need to ask them to send over to you by fax or by e-mail today the criteria pursuant to which the bonus was paid. It's a very simple request.

The taxpayers are the owners of this corporation. The hydro ratepayers are the people who are paying the money to the company that is paying its executives whatever they get paid. I am simply asking you to make public to those people—I think they're entitled to know now—on what basis the bonus was calculated and on what basis it was paid. I'm asking you to simply stand up and say, "Tomorrow we will be here with that information." Will you be here with that information tomorrow, stop dragging your feet and do it?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I would just like to make a correction: It's actually the ratepayer, not the taxpayer, in terms of the dollars around electricity.

I repeat to the member that I have written to the different agencies. The boards have the responsibility of determining executive salaries and compensation. I think it's reasonable to ask for an explanation. I have asked to sit down with them for that explanation for all the agencies. I would, however, remind the member opposite that it's interesting to note that when they were at Hydro, I think it was Mr. Gourley who was paid \$4.6 million. Mr. Harris himself received almost \$19,000. Mr. Rhodes received \$1 billion. Mr. Long received—

Interjections.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Oh, you think it's great about that \$1 billion—\$1 million, sorry.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock.

New question.

1440

Mr. Tory: My question is for the Premier. The minister is like Dr. No over there, with a million/billion dollars, but it's not funny. You actually helped me because you introduced the subject I want to introduce here, which is saying one thing and doing another.

My question to the Premier is this: When you were in opposition, you had a lot to say about a lot of subjects, and a lot of those things you said then seemed to mean very little when you got over to the government benches. When you were in opposition, you were demanding answers about people at Hydro One and their salaries, and you were bouncing off the walls. You once told the Premier of the day, "Your job was to protect hydro ratepayers. You had an option. Why did you roll over for the board? Why did you not stand up for ratepayers?"

All I'm asking today is this: Could you just explain to us the basis upon which this gentlemen received a bonus of \$500,000? You know it. It's written down. It's been part of the record for some time and the bonus has been paid. Why do we need to have meetings and correspondence and all kinds of things like that? Just tell us the information so the taxpayers and the ratepayers will know. Will you do it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'll see if I can help the leader of the official opposition further in this regard.

I'm surprised they're not aware of some of the contractual matters related to Mr. Parkinson's contract since they were the first government to award a contract to Mr. Parkinson. We have essentially renewed that very same contract. So if Mr. Tory is looking for the source of the financial relationship we have between Hydro One and the CEO, he need look no further than his own party.

Mr. Tory: Premier, I don't know whether to agree or disagree, because you haven't provided us with the basis upon which the bonus was calculated. All we're asking for—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: All we're asking for, very simply, is that regardless of who authored the contract, you tell us the criteria set by the board of directors pursuant to which this man was paid a half-million-dollar bonus. It's a very simple question. I think it is something that, when you were in opposition, you would have most certainly felt was something the public was entitled to know. In fact, you said back then, "Can you tell me once again, Premier, why it is that when push comes to shove, you're on the side of the board of directors and you didn't stand up for ratepayers?" If you want to stand up for the ratepayers and actually, for a change, do what you said in opposition when you're in government, then simply stand in your place and tell us the basis upon which this man received a \$500,000 bonus. It's a very simple question. Will you do it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, that was a provision that was inserted, presumably deliberately, by Mr. Tory's

government in the past. I can say with some pride that we are not paying the CEO of Hydro One over \$2.4 million, which had been paid by the Conservative government to one Eleanor Clitheroe. I can also say with some degree of pride that we are shining the sunlight on these matters, which were hidden from view by the previous government.

Let me say this again so that Mr. Tory completely understands this: The contract in place is the one that he put in place. Secondly, it is 30% less than the one they awarded to Eleanor Clitheroe. Thirdly, we have brought sun shine on these matters so that for the first time the people of Ontario have access to this information.

Mr. Tory: If the Premier is so determined to let the sunshine in, then I don't know why you don't answer my question, which I'm now asking for the sixth time. You said it's a contract that I put in place. Well, I hardly put it in place. But having said that, you are engaging—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: You have a chance to redeem yourself here, because whether it's autistic children, balanced budgets, not raising taxes, hydro rate caps or hydro compensation issues, your pattern has been to say one thing in opposition and do another in government. You have a chance right now to tell us: Do you have any standards in respect of public sector bonuses? Are you prepared to share with us the criteria pursuant to which—and I don't mean in a month or after meetings or correspondence. Will you share with us tomorrow—it's a reasonable request—the basis upon which this gentleman was paid the half-million-dollar bonus, so the hydro ratepayers whom you pledged to protect will be able to see what happened? Will you do it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The minister made it clear both yesterday and again today—and I think she's done this on at least three separate occasions now—that she's going to look into the matter. I think we should give her time to acquire that information.

Again, I think it is not entirely irrelevant that the contract in place now between Hydro One and its CEO was essentially the contract that was put in place by the previous government. Mr. Tory says he's distancing himself from the previous government in this regard. We wonder in how many other places he's going to be distancing himself from the record of those he's sitting among here today.

As well, I would say that we take pride in the fact that we are shining sunlight for the first time on these kinds of issues, so that the people of Ontario can gain a good understanding for the very first time of these very kinds of issues. That was the kind of thing that the previous government was not particularly partial to. We think it's right and we think it's legitimate. We think it's high time it was done, and that's why we did it.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): A question for the Premier: When exactly did the McGuinty

government decide to order the review of Hydro executive salaries that was announced yesterday? When are the review meetings taking place? Who will be there? When can hydro ratepayers expect to see the outrageous Hydro executive pay packages reduced?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: In fact, I said that compensation is the responsibility of the board and that I thought it was reasonable to have a meeting with them, to have an understanding of how they had come to their determination. I said that yesterday; I said it this morning. I'm quite prepared to meet with all of the agencies for those explanations. I think that's fair and reasonable. I've indicated that I will do that, and I expect to have those meetings take place very shortly.

Mr. Hampton: It's puzzling, because the McGuinty government waited until yesterday to launch this review, but the McGuinty government has known for over a year about the outrageous Hydro executive pay packages. Here's an article from the Toronto Sun, March 2, 2005, where it says, "Ontario Energy Minister Dwight Duncan said he supports the 35% raise given to the CEO of ... Hydro One." My question to the Premier is, since you've known about these executive pay increases, why did you sit on your hands for more than a year, while hydro ratepayers of the province were fleeced under your government?

1450

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: First of all, I'd like to correct the record. Mr. Rhodes only made just over \$1 million dollars.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins—James Bay): That's all?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: That's all.

As I had indicated, the executive salaries are the responsibility of the respective boards. I've written to each of the boards to ask for an explanation of how they came to those determinations. That's a reasonable and fair question to ask. I've written the letters and I'm going to sit down with them very shortly to ask how they made the determination. I have every intention of doing that.

Mr. Hampton: It remains that the former Minister of Energy knew that this was happening a year ago. In fact, this is how outrageous the Hydro executive pay packages are under the McGuinty government: Hydro Québec is a very large utility. It has assets of \$57 billion. Their chief executive officer is paid in the \$500,000 range. Hydro One has assets of only \$11 billion, but under the McGuinty government, Mr. Parkinson gets paid \$1.56 million. In fact, it's even more outrageous than that. The three other large utilities in Canada—Hydro Québec, Manitoba Hydro and BC Hydro—pay their three executive officers, combined, less than the McGuinty government pays Tom Parkinson.

My question for the Premier is: Under the McGuinty government, why are working families paying such outrageous salaries to Tom Parkinson and other Hydro executives?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I'll repeat this again, maybe slowly: I have asked for a meeting with the chair and the

executives, who have the responsibility for all of these boards, for an explanation of how they made the determinations. I will sit down with them. I will find out how. Maybe we could ask the member the same question as to how he determined Mr. Strong's compensation or Ms. Clitheroe's compensation. I'm prepared to sit down and ask for that explanation from the people who in fact have the responsibility for that determination. I've said that I will do it. I will do it, and I will do it with all of the agencies.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: It seems to me that there has to be some accountability on the part of your government. The real problem, the bigger problem, is that your government, the McGuinty government, has set up a convoluted, wasteful, bureaucratic electricity system. It's a hydro hydra, a four-headed electricity monster, that's driving up electricity rates, devouring people's wallets and resulting in tens of thousands of lost industrial jobs. You pay a Hydro One executive \$1.56 million. You say you pay the OPG top-salaried official \$866,000. You pay the Independent Electricity System Operator chief executive \$728,000. You pay your former fundraiser, Jan Carr, at the Ontario Power Authority, \$637,000.

Under the McGuinty government, Premier, why are working families being gouged? Why are working families paying these bloated executive salaries at the hydro electricity monsters that you've created?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question, but I might like to ask the member—in fact, the Ontario Energy Board, the regulator, has the responsibility for the scrutiny of the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, both boards that have been mentioned. I was curious as to whether or not during that public scrutiny, the member actually had gone to any of those meetings to articulate the position he's now articulating in the House. It's an open and transparent process. He has that opportunity.

I will repeat that I'm quite prepared to sit down with those executives, who have the final determination, as to how they reached those determinations, and get an explanation. I think that's very reasonable to do. I've indicated I'm going to do it. I'm quite prepared to do it, and I will do it very shortly.

Mr. Hampton: My question is really to the Premier, because it's about: Does the McGuinty government have even an elementary understanding of accountability? Under the McGuinty government, being a hydro electricity executive is like winning the all-time lottery. The 10 top-paid provincial Hydro executives in Canada are all in Ontario, under the McGuinty government: two from Hydro One, one from the Independent Electricity System Operator, one from the Ontario Power Authority and six from Ontario Power Generation.

Premier, I thought it was your job to protect hydro ratepayers, to protect those working families who are in fact paying the bill. When did the priority of the

McGuinty government become paying Hydro executives the top 10 salaries in Canada and allowing ratepayers to be gouged?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: As a matter of fact, over the last number of years, a good 10 years, generation in this province fell by 6%, whereas our need grew by 8%. So the fact of the matter is that we have put new generation onside. We require the people and the expertise with which to do it. You do pay for quality; it is synonymous, often, with the price that you pay for someone's expertise. So I don't have any difficulty in people determining the value of a skill set.

I have indicated that I am quite prepared to sit down with the folks who make these determinations and listen to their rationale as to how they make those determinations. But we have put more generation in this province than they had in many years. In fact, it had been neglected for so many years. You do need to attract good people—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: No, Minister. You've driven up the electricity bill for all kinds of people and you've killed tens of thousands of good industrial jobs.

But I want go back to the Premier, because this is about accountability. One self-described hydro expert said that government reviews won't do. Talking about Eleanor Clitheroe's bloated salary, this is what this self-described expert said: "This is not a matter that needs to be sent out to review. This is a matter that requires you to say, 'Mea culpa. This will never, ever happen again. It is wrong, it is entirely inappropriate and I will do everything in my power to make sure this never, ever happens again.'" Who said that? Dalton McGuinty, just three years ago.

My question to the Premier is this: Are you going to follow your own words? Are you going to reduce these salaries? Are you going to work on behalf of the ratepayers and the working families, or were those words that you said just meaningless words, like so many other words that you say?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I would like to remind the member of the third party that in fact it was Mr. Bob Rae, the former Premier and NDP member, who is the chair of the compensation committee that approved Mr. Parkinson's salary and has the responsibility to do so.

Let me quote what he said: "The design of the program facilitates the attraction, motivation and retention of executives, critical for Hydro One's current and long-term success." I am quite prepared to sit down and have an explanation of their rationale for their decision. But it is the decision of the board of directors and the chair of that board in determining compensation packages. I'm quite happy to have a fair explanation of that. I have asked for that meeting in writing, and it will take place very shortly.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. I'd like to follow along on the

theme of accountability. As the minister, you're responsible to ensure that the public interest is served in the administration of education. Can you tell the House, then, why you insist through Bill 78 to hand over control of the governing council of the Ontario College of Teachers to the very same unions whose mandate it is to defend its members against public charges? Why have you done that?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I think, for those who are watching, it certainly is a reminder in this House of why we needed a change in government. We needed a change from a government that would take every opportunity to attack and presume the worst of other people. If you want to be elected to government, you have to be able to work with the people who are in government. What it means is that the students out there have benefited because there is an atmosphere of co-operation.

1500

The college of teachers has one purpose: to look after the public interest. Under the previous government that the member opposite was a part of, there was a fight going on in the college of teachers. The reforms we're bringing in will make it a neutral body that looks after the public interest. In fact, it will prohibit anyone who serves full-time, either for the Ministry of Education or for a teacher federation, from serving on the college of teachers, whereas there were eight, 10 and 15 members under this member opposite's government.

In fact, we are returning the college of teachers to its original purpose: a professional body that looks after the public interest in teaching, and like other improvements, students will be better off because of—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Klees: The minister needs to be reminded that it was the Royal Commission on Learning that recommended that this college be independent of those unions. I want to point out to the minister—I'm going to ask a page to take this letter over to the minister. Page, please.

I want the minister to see this letter, which comes to him from a member of his cabinet. In that letter it says the following: "No professional college can act in the public interest when its governing council is controlled by one union whose own mandate it is to defend its members against public charges. This issue must be addressed, as a council controlled by the Ontario Teachers' Federation will further increase the widespread perception that the college is controlled by the teachers' unions and does not adequately protect or represent the public interest."

That is a letter to you, sir, sent by one of your cabinet colleagues, Donna Cansfield. Why did you not take her advice? I have spoken with many stakeholders in education who disagree with you. You have sold out the college of teachers, whose responsibility it is to look after the public interest. Why did you do that?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: We need to go no further to understand the credibility of the member opposite, when

he's citing a letter from December 2004 talking about the college that the member opposite had a hand in designing.

What our new legislation—which I hope, when its explanation is clear, will get the member opposite's support, as it deserves—will in fact do is prohibit any members of the college of teachers being sitting members representing federations or school boards or the Ministry of Education, for the first time. In fact, the college constituted by the member opposite actually had 12 members on it who were full-time representatives of teachers' unions. That's what you put together. We think the public interest means that it should be classroom teachers who are being regulated by the college, who are the profession that sits in judgment of what should be done in the public interest.

We believe in teachers. We believe in public education. Just like the other reforms that we've brought, this will work in the interests of students. And just like the other reforms, it will be vastly superior to the approach of the previous government, where we had eight and, I guess, 10 lost years.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): A question to the Minister of Education: Your government claims to have fixed the problems in Ontario's education funding formula. Can you explain why the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has resorted to asking for donations for music, art, outdoor education and literacy and numeracy projects?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I'm very pleased to report to the member opposite that we have improved education funding in the province of Ontario such that the per capita funding has increased almost 20% under this government. What it means is that this year we have 600 specialist teachers bringing arts education back into the schools across the province. We have initiatives, not just by our ministry but by the Ministry of Culture and by my colleague the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture, bringing in new programs, helping to make sure that the arts have come back.

We have provided resources on a range of programs that are enriching education. We say that every student should have access to the arts and education. We have daily physical activity and have expanded phys ed back in our schools for the first time in years. It didn't happen under the previous government or the one before that.

So what I would say is that we believe that the essential education, a high level—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Marchese: I think, Minister, that instead of focusing on the top job in Ottawa, you should focus on the students in Ottawa, and I don't think you're doing that. To quote an Ottawa trustee, "It is not our intent to replace provincial funding; however, we just cannot wait

any longer while our children go without." School boards are robbing regularly from one program to pay for another, ESL is one example, French as a second language, special ed. They are robbing from one area to pay for another. School boards are forced to fundraise to pay for education essentials, and it's not just happening in Ottawa. London, Kingston and Halton are doing the same.

Minister, three years ago you promised a standing committee on education funding. Are you going to keep that commitment to students and parents, or was it just another empty promise you made on the climb to the top?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: I'm glad to see that the member again has a question in this respect, but I would say to him very seriously that the parents and students of Ottawa-Carleton are very well served by an extremely enhanced education system. More than half of them are in smaller sized classes, capped at 20. They are getting individual attention that they never had before. We have been able to provide enhanced literacy and numeracy, as I said. In two years, there's a 15% increase in the attainment of reading, writing and mathematics by students right across the province, and the ones with the biggest challenges are the ones with the biggest increases in improvement. For the first time in 25 years, we have a reduction in the dropout rate. Our student success program is offering enhanced, customized education to individual students across the province.

Most trustees don't share your pessimism or the pessimism of somebody you selectively quoted. The chair of the Ottawa board says that what they are raising money for is enhancements. Distinct from the member opposite, who sees government doing everything, we want to work in partnership. A basic, excellent education—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As you know, Minister, the federal government will be delivering its first throne speech later this afternoon, and my farmers expect good news from the federal government. Why? Because during the recent federal election, Stephen Harper promised an extra \$500 million each year for agriculture. In addition, 16 Conservative MPs signed the commitment-to-agriculture card during the recent election, including the new federal finance minister, Jim Flaherty. This commitment included an immediate investment in farmers after the election and sufficient funding for the following two years, until the next agricultural policy framework can be designed and implemented in 2008.

Minister, on behalf of my farmers, how important is it that today's federal throne speech represent the beginning of an effective partnership with Ontario for a long-term, viable and economically sustainable agricultural framework?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): The member from Perth–Middlesex has identified a very, very important issue for the people of Canada, for the farmers of Canada, and certainly for the farmers of Ontario.

We are going to be looking very intently at what is contained in the throne speech, because our government has made a commitment to the farmers of Ontario. We have made it very clear that we agree with them when they say they need a multi-year partnership with the federal government. We believe that too.

We would encourage members of the opposition—I say to the Leader of the Opposition, you hit the speed-dial button. Hit the speed-dial button for Mr. Flaherty and for the Prime Minister of Canada and say that farmers in Ontario are in desperate circumstances and they need a strategy now. That's what we're looking for in the federal throne speech. We would appreciate your help and your support for farmers in Ontario by—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

1510

Mr. Wilkinson: Minister, I couldn't agree more. As my farmers know, the provincial treasury is no match for the US Treasury and the US farm bill all by itself. We need our partner in Ottawa, because only they have the money for a stable, long-term plan that meets the needs of Ontario farmers working in conjunction with our government.

On Friday, March 31, I met with my local farmers at our annual MP-MPP briefing, organized by the Perth federation of agriculture. During the meeting, my farmers conveyed yet again their appreciation for the \$125 million our government announced in financial assistance prior to the spring planting. They said, "We thank the minister for an initial investment to this problem." However, our government and my farm leaders recognize that ad hoc financial assistance is not the answer to the challenges facing our producers.

Minister, should today's federal throne speech not deliver on the Conservative government's election promises, my farmers need to know that our government will continue to work with the federal government and our provincial and territorial counterparts on a new agricultural—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm always happy to get a question from the honourable member, who works so very hard on behalf of the farmers in his riding—he truly does—and we appreciate that.

I think it's interesting that he points to the investment that our government made—\$125 million—the announcement that was made before the budget. The Leader of the Opposition called us spendaholics for doing that, but I believe that it was a very good investment for the agricultural community and one that was absolutely necessary.

With respect to working toward the new agriculture policy framework, I can commit to the federal minister

and to my colleague ministers from across Canada that I think we have learned very well where this framework has worked well: investments in research and innovation. We recognize that we need to do a better job at business risk management and income support. Our government is absolutely committed. We will not tire in our efforts to support agriculture and farmers in Ontario. That is a commitment—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I have a question for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Last Thursday, this House learned that your budget had actually cut or reduced the financial aid for the Ontario summer jobs program; that included a cut to the Junior Ranger program. But what concerned me at the time when I responded was that most of the programs that were contained in these posters that you sent to us expired that same weekend. The Ontario-Quebec student job exchange was cut off February 28; the summer company program is cut off this weekend. As the minister responsible, have you investigated why these materials that are so important for students in Ontario were sent out so late, when most university and college students will be leaving their campuses within the next week or so?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I thank the member for the opportunity to correct the inaccurate information that he was presenting to the House when he made his statement. The fact of the matter is that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities reports on a number of different programs that comprise the summer job strategy. All of the programs had been advertised, a number of them announced, long before I stood up in the House to make the announcement. For example, the Ontario-Quebec exchange program that the member spoke about, which is available only to university students, had over 200 applicants when I stood up in the House to speak about it—over 200 applicants for the very program that would have 50 successful people who were going to be accommodated. That was just one of a number.

So the member is not correct. We didn't reduce the amount of funding. In fact, there is always a difference between the estimates and the actual. And all of these programs were being advertised—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Jackson: I have copies of last year's press release and this year's press release—they came from your office—and the amount has been reduced; the number of students served has been reduced. My concern is that after we left the House last Thursday, we went to our offices and we got this package from Promotional Products Fulfillment and Distribution Ltd. By Friday, I got this package from Purolator filled with posters for the programs that have expired, at a cost of \$191. When I called the promotional company, I asked them, "Where

are the French versions, and where could I get them?" They said, "Don't worry. By next Wednesday," which is tomorrow, "we will have sent all this material to colleges and universities across Ontario."

Minister, I'm simply asking you, will you get to the bottom of who screwed up in your ministry and didn't get this material out in a timely fashion? University students are not going to be able to get full access to these programs, which, frankly, according to your press releases, you have reduced the amount to. Will you undertake a review and find out what happened, find out why this company you're paying \$305,000 a year to was late in getting this material out across Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The member is right about one thing: I will certainly investigate the suggestions he makes with respect to the program itself, because what he was saying last week is simply inaccurate. To repeat, the Ontario-Quebec program he made great hay of last week has been advertised for months. In fact, it was in the late fall that it was advertised on campuses throughout Ontario. There were, when I stood up, I learned, more than 200 applicants for a program that has 45 successful participants. When he reads from press releases year on year, as he would understand, there's a difference between the estimates and the actuals. What's interesting is that he might have forgotten that when he was in government, the program was advertised one year in May; the summer jobs program was advertised once in June. The fact of the matter is that a lot of the programs have start dates at the beginning of April. The fact of the matter is that they are being well advertised. My colleague actually announced his—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Premier. Tonight you will be attending yet another \$2,000-a-table fundraiser, this time in Vaughan, Ontario. You promised you would tighten the laws that allow corporate donors to buy access, but dinner after dinner comes and goes, and all we hear is more promises from you that one day you will outlaw this practice. Can you tell us when, if ever, new laws will be in place to stop precisely what you are going to do tonight?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. He will remember that just a few months ago we passed Bill 214. For the very first time, we will make transparent contributions of \$100 or more to riding associations: within 15 days to Elections Ontario and within another 15 to the websites of each of the parties. So you'll know very shortly who was there tonight and how much they spent—all transparent. Having said that, we also said that we would look at political finance reform, and in a supplementary I'll talk more about that.

Mr. Prue: Of course, the minister talked about riding associations, not about your party, because it is, of course, exempt. Over the last three years, your democratic renewal ministry has spent more than \$15 million, but you haven't managed to put a single word to legislation. Instead, you're holding yet another high-priced fundraiser where corporate donors and well-heeled lobbyists will get to buy access to you, to the Premier, to your cabinet, to your caucus. Meanwhile, ordinary Ontarians, like the parents who lose nearly \$1,500 a year to your child welfare clawback, are left in the cold. Will new laws be in place before the next election, or is this just another broken promise you intend to keep?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I'm very proud of our record on democratic renewal and very proud of the former minister for democratic renewal, the Attorney General, who began this road with Bill 213 and then Bill 214. Not only will we be looking at political finance reform, and more on that will be shared in the near future, but we also just announced last week the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. This is just part of the whole package of democratic renewal; also modernizing elections. And I just want to remind the member once again that within 30 days, he will know exactly who was there tonight and how much they spent.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): My question is to the Minister of Education. During the past few months, I've had meetings and discussions with the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. These discussions concern the board's ability to balance its budget in the previous fiscal year and beyond. Management members from the Dufferin-Peel board have met and spoken with me and with the other members of the Peel caucus to discuss their assertions of underfunding of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. The board claimed they would have to submit revised estimates showing a deficit as high as \$15 million. This concerned me, as our government has increased the funding to school boards by historic amounts, including to this one, since we've been in office.

Minister, you appointed an investigator in this matter to see where the discrepancy lies. Could you please tell the House what the status of the report is?

1520

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I am happy to report to the House that we today have received a report from independent investigators, actually two: a lead investigator and an associate investigator. Essentially, their findings are that the Dufferin-Peel board has a much smaller deficit than was originally reported, that the budget can be balanced and students can be protected. In fact, they have outlined a number of ways in which that can be done to both balance the budget and address significant financial management issues.

With the new information that's in the report, we're very hopeful that the Dufferin-Peel board, which the

report commends for offering good quality education services, will actually take it upon themselves and be able to do that, using the new information that comes in the investigators' report, balance the budget and correct some of the financial practices that didn't allow them to have as close a control as they might wish to have over their finances.

Mr. Delaney: Knowing that the report will be made public this afternoon is news that our community will welcome. We in Peel region are relieved to know that the investigators' report has been received and that at last we're going to have a third-party analysis of our situation in the Dufferin-Peel board.

Now that the report has been received and will be made public this afternoon, what are the next steps to follow up on this report, and finally, how will our future education priorities benefit the students of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: I think it's clear from the investigators' report that there are both the resources and programs taking place to offer an excellent education to all the students in Dufferin-Peel. They will get the benefits of lower class sizes, they will have a rigorous student success program to lower the dropout rate and they will have all of the other enhancements as well.

The original concern was a deficit that could be \$15 million. The report says that the maximum it could be is \$11 million and it could be as low as \$5 million. It could, as well, be addressed with areas like overspending in administration. There's about \$4 million extra being spent in that area, which we hope the board will be able to look at and find ways to meet some of the investigators' expectations. But we do not intend to dictate to the board. We do believe that this is information the board did not have previously. We think it's important that they be given a chance and this report be given a chance to be useful to them in resolving this issue.

After some long-standing back and forth, we have an independent report. It tells the parents, the staff and the board what some good options are to have the highest-quality education and still ensure that every dollar that we put into education counts.

COST OF ELECTRICAL POWER

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): For the Minister of Energy: Earlier today the Premier was telling us how proud he was that your government has shone the light of day on certain issues with regard to crown corporations and bragged about your transparency. Let's hear some transparency and let's see it.

You announced today the power plants in Brampton. A couple of weeks ago you talked about paying up to 42 cents a kilowatt hour for renewable power. The people of Ontario want to know the facts. What is going to be the true cost—don't obscure the facts here—of power at this new power plant?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the member for the question. The Ontario Power

Authority is completing the final details, and when those details are available, I will make them available to the member.

A number of questions have been raised this afternoon, especially around the issue of Hydro One. I think it's really important that the member and the opposition members should recognize that Hydro One was actually incorporated under Ontario's Business Corporations Act, which was done so they could sell Hydro One. In essence, when they did that, they actually made Tom Parkinson not an employee of the government but an employee of that corporation, a very fine distinction so that they in fact as the shareholder could sell that plan.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm not sure what that plan has to do with Hydro One. But look, the people want to know. You can't simply go out there and pay whatever the seller wants because you people have put yourselves in a box with regard to supply in this province. You've got to stop running around in circles. You've got to face the facts. Your plans aren't working. It is important that the people know. What is electricity going to cost them down the road in this province? When we're trying to compete with people across North America, what is electricity going to cost under your plan? We want sunshine on the contracts at each one of these plants. Minister, will you commit to that now?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question. He has a very interesting definition of "box." If you'd like hear about a box, how about the need for 25,000 megawatts of new supply by 2025 because you neglected the supply? How about new transmission because you neglected the transmission? How about the need to redo Conawapa because it was cancelled? How about the need to do conservation because you couldn't spell it, much less say it? How about all the things that we need to be able to do because your definition of a box is that as the need grew by 6%, the capacity fell by 8%?

You want to talk about what we're doing? We're keeping the lights on. You were turning them off. We're making a difference.

Mr. Yakabuski: I can spell Conawapa.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: It was "conservation" actually.

In fact, we have put Ontario back on the road to keeping the lights on for the people of Ontario.

RECYCLING PLANT

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Your ministry has allowed ABP Recycling in Hamilton to operate for over a year without a certificate of approval. It wasn't, in fact, until the city of Hamilton called to indicate that they had been dumping illegal waste water into our sewer system that your officials showed up to investigate. Now that same company, ABP, wants a new certificate of approval to relocate and expand their operations in Hamilton. My question is simple: Will you commit to denying that certificate of approval?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): Thank you very much for the question. Each and

every circumstance in the province where certificates of approval are not met causes concern for me as the Minister of the Environment and causes concern for the ministry. The information with respect to ABP is one that I will solicit immediately from my ministry, and I will certainly get back to this Legislature when I have more information with respect to ABP.

Ms. Horwath: Minister, the problem is that you've failed to protect Hamilton residents from ABP's illegal operations for over a year already and there's an application right now on your desk to let them continue to pollute in Hamilton. Allowing ABP's expansion means more smog and more carcinogens into Hamilton's airshed, and there are already studies indicating that our airshed is to the limit in terms of toxins. Will you do what is right today and stop ABP from emitting more smog and more carcinogens into Hamilton's air and deny that certificate approval for ABP?

Hon. Ms. Broten: Full vigour will be brought to the examination of the certificate of approval. It is not appropriate for me to prejudge a certificate of approval with no documents in front of me, but I can certainly tell the member opposite that I have grave concern with respect to the airshed in Hamilton, and this government is doing a great deal to protect that airshed.

Seventy per cent of Hamilton's air pollution comes across the border with respect to transboundary air pollution. It was our Premier who, for the very first time, raised this issue across both nations last year. We will continue to undertake that work. I am working closely with the Hamilton community with respect to their airshed. We want to ensure a future for Hamiltonians with clean air, clean water and clean land. That's something that our government is undertaking each and every day in the Ministry of the Environment.

1530

ENERGY RATES

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday in the House, you spoke about energy price increases of 32% in Massachusetts. Massachusetts isn't alone. I understand that rates have gone up in Alberta by 23%. It appears that energy prices are going up everywhere.

Energy is critically important in our daily lives, from the time we wake up till the time we go to bed. If we have an electric blanket, we even need it when we're in bed. It's very disturbing to think what our energy bills would look like with a 32% increase.

Minister, I know the Ontario Energy Board sets energy prices here in Ontario, but what can we do to ensure that the people in my riding of London North Centre and the people across Ontario won't see the kinds of energy price increases that the people in Alberta and Massachusetts are seeing?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I'd like to thank the member for her question and her

constant involvement, especially around people with low incomes and social housing needs.

There's no question, with 32% in Massachusetts and 23% in Alberta, that energy prices are rising, but I do not anticipate that any of those kinds of increases will be here. The Ontario Energy Board does have the authority—we are experiencing higher usage. We had an exceptionally hot summer. We know that gas prices have increased. As a matter of fact, we even know fuel prices have increased, including coal. So we know there are challenges ahead of us, but I am quite comfortable that we are not going to actually deal with increases of 32%, as you see in Massachusetts, or the 23% you see in Alberta, or the extraordinary increases right across the United States.

Ms. Matthews: My constituents are anxious about next month's price increase and what that will mean for their monthly budgets. When you live on a fixed income, there really isn't any extra money available to plan for an increase, and even when you're not on a fixed income, a price increase reduces the amount of money you have to spend on other things, often necessities. Regardless of what price the OEB comes out with, what can Ontarians do to lessen the impact of the increase in the OEB-regulated price?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question. We've done a number of initiatives, especially around low income. In particular, we've been working with LIEN, which is a low-income group, to help develop social programming, for example, within social housing. We've worked with the social housing corporation itself. We've piloted a program in 20 communities with over 5,000 units. We've now expanded that program to about \$9.25 million. In addition to that, we have listed a directive with the Ontario Power Authority requiring that they find 100 megawatts of supply in the appliances alone.

We have put a very concentrated effort toward low-income and social housing because we recognize that as prices increase, those who can least afford it are often more significantly hit. So how do we help them to mitigate those challenges? We are working very diligently with the sector in order to do that, because we recognize that this is indeed a challenge for all Ontarians, but in particular for those in low-income and social housing.

COURT SECURITY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Yesterday at the Windsor courthouse, a man being sentenced for assault pulled out a knife, ran to the front of the courtroom and slashed his arms and threatened to slash his throat right in front of the judge. He could easily have been carrying a handgun.

As the minister responsible for public safety in this province, what are you doing to assure the citizens of Ontario that this type of action never happens again in an Ontario courtroom?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for the question. I honestly can't guarantee that it will never happen in a courtroom again, but we do provide court security, and that is something that we have been doing for some time. We provide transportation from a correctional facility to the courts. We provide officers in the courts to provide that security.

This is an unfortunate situation. I can't really comment on the specifics, because this is something the police will be dealing with and it is really an operational issue for them. But I just want to assure citizens of Ontario that court security is provided, and this is something that is there to help prevent things like this happening.

Mr. Dunlop: Minister, as a result of yesterday's incident, only one of the 10 courtrooms in the Windsor courthouse is open today to the public, and that's because the court staff are too afraid to work in that environment.

A ministry spokesman said in today's Windsor Star that the experts in court security are the police, yet you and your government are not listening to the many concerns of the police about court security. We've heard this over and over again; in fact, your PA has done some kind of examination of court security.

We believe that you have totally dropped the ball on the review of court security in this province, but can I ask you this: What will you do as minister to ensure that the employees of the Windsor courthouse, and all other courtrooms in the province of Ontario, can return to work tomorrow in a safe environment?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: I just want to correct the member's statement about my then parliamentary assistant looking into court security. There has never been a question about the actual security in the courtrooms. Where the question has been—and it's been raised for some time and is a result of downloading by your government when you were in power—is in paying for court security. This is a major issue with AMO and a major issue with municipalities: worrying about the cost of providing that court security and how it can work, because what is happening is that a courtroom will be in a jurisdiction, and many other communities are using it and they're not paying their share. So that investigation had nothing to do with the actual security; it had to do with how you fund it.

I want to assure you and the rest of the citizens of Ontario that there is court security in all the courthouses in Ontario. That is something we're very concerned about.

RESIGNATION OF AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg leave to inform the House that I have today received a letter of resignation, effective June 9, 2006, from Jim McCarter, the Auditor General of Ontario. On behalf of all members, I would like to acknowledge and thank Mr. McCarter for his dedicated and professional service to Ontario and to wish him well in future endeavours.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents, who are residents of long-term-care homes, need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

"Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

"Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

"We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

This has been signed by a significant number of my constituents, most of whom are interested in the Royal Terrace nursing home in Palmerston, and of course it has my support as well.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a very important petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Whereas the people of Ontario demand a quality public education system that will give our children the tools to compete with the world; and

"Whereas Premier McGuinty and the Liberal caucus are fighting for our future by implementing a positive plan to improve our public schools, including smaller class sizes;

"Whereas the Conservative Party and John Tory want to take millions from the public education to literally pay people to withdraw their children from the public system and send them to elite private schools;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support Premier McGuinty in his commitment to giving our children a ladder to success through excellent public education and not spend taxpayer dollars to benefit the few who can afford private school tuitions."

I'll affix my name to that petition.

1540

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PLAN

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health for Ontario via OHIP permits discriminating reimbursement policies for at least one specific heart medication. The medication referred to is Sotalol, a medication required to establish regular heartbeat. The 80-milligram version cannot be claimed for reimbursement, while the 160-milligram version can;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To establish equitable rules for the reimbursement by OHIP of the above-mentioned medication and to instruct OHIP not to differentiate claimability for reimbursement on the basis of differently sized doses for one and the same medication.”

I affix my signature, as I agree with it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition given to me by the family council at the Elizabeth Centre. I want to thank Shirley Chenard, the president of the residents’ council, and also the family and friends circle of the Elizabeth Centre for taking the time to have this petition circulated in the home. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years.”

I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): This petition is from my constituents at Chateau Gardens in Parkhill.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging

seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years....”

SPECIAL CARE HOMES

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas hundreds of vulnerable adults live in homes for special care that provide them a warm and secure, stable and friendly environment which allows them to lead fulfilling lives; and

“Whereas the alternative for many of these individuals is a life of homelessness on the street; and

“Whereas special care homes have had only a single 3% increase since 1999, which in no way matches the rising costs they face; and

“Whereas the Liberal government promised Ontario in the election they would ‘significantly increase supportive housing options for those suffering from mental illness’;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the government to bring in an immediate increase in funding to homes for special care.”

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature and given it to page Roman.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition signed by hundreds of residents and family members of seniors who live at Extencare York in Sudbury. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up,

dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years....”

I agree with the petitioners. I’ve affixed my signature to this.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge):

I’m pleased to present this petition for the member from Mississauga West.

“Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Support Community Mediation

“Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers who work with the parties in the dispute; and

“Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

“Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

“Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

“Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services.”

I’m going to pass this page on through Andrew.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I have several hundred signatures from the family members of the residents’ council, and residents themselves, of the Burloak long-term-care facility in Burlington. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging

seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining” further;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly ... to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

I’m pleased to give this to Elyse with my signature of support on it also.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition on long-term care that was given to me by the residents’ council at Pioneer Manor in Sudbury. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years....”

I agree with the petitioners, and I’ve affixed my signature to this.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas it has been shown that crossing control arms on school buses reduce or virtually eliminate instances of students being struck by their own bus; and

“Whereas 91% of all front-bumper fatalities involve buses not equipped with crossing control arms; and

“Whereas the safety of the children of Ontario is our number one priority;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to require that all existing school buses be required to be immediately retrofitted with crossing control arms.”

I am pleased to sign and support this petition.

1550

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I’d like read this petition on macular degeneration, drafted by Dr. Tim Hillson, an ophthalmologist up in Orillia.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly and is present in some form in 25% to 33% of seniors over the age of 75. AMD has two forms: the more common ‘dry’ type and the ‘wet’ type. Although the wet type occurs in only 15% of AMD patients, these patients account for 90% of the legal blindness that occurs with AMD. The wet type is further subdivided into classic and occult subtypes, based on the appearance of the AMD on special testing. Photodynamic therapy, a treatment where abnormal blood vessels are closed with a laser-activated chemical, has been shown to slow the progression of vision loss in both subtypes of wet AMD;

“Whereas OHIP has not extended coverage for photodynamic therapy to the occult subtype of wet AMD, despite there being substantial clinical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this treatment in patients with either form of wet AMD. Untreated, these patients can expect a progression in their visual loss, with central blindness as the end result;

“Whereas affected patients are in a position where a proven treatment is available to help preserve their vision, but this treatment can only be accessed at their own personal expense. Treatment costs are between \$12,500 and \$18,000 over an 18-month period. Many patients resign themselves to a continued worsening of their vision, as for them the treatment is financially unattainable. The resultant blindness in these patients manifests itself as costs to society in other forms, such as an increased need for home care, missed time from work for family members providing care, and an increased rate of injuries such as hip fractures that can be directly attributable to their poor vision.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of the occult subtype of macular degeneration with photodynamic therapy for all patients awaiting this service.”

I’m pleased to sign this and present it to Cameron to present to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition on behalf of the resident councils and family councils at

Royal Oak Gardens, Banwell Gardens, Brouillette Manor, Château Park, Extencicare Tecumseh, Extencicare Southwood Lakes, Heron Terrace, Regency Park and Windsor Place, and it reads

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

I have signed this petition, and I will give it to Shelby to take to the Clerk’s table.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, before you get to the orders of the day, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding extending the afternoon session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there unanimous consent for the government House leader to put forward such a motion? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the House sit beyond 6 p.m. for the purpose of completing consideration of the second reading stage of Bill 190, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting one new Act, following which the Speaker shall adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 5, 2006, and that, notwithstanding the previous motion, the House shall not meet at 6:45 this evening.

The Acting Speaker: The government House leader has moved that the House sit beyond 6 p.m. for the purpose of completing consideration of the second reading stage of Bill 190, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting one new Act, following which the Speaker shall adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 5, 2006, and that notwithstanding the previous motion, the House shall not meet at 6:45 this evening.

Does the House agree? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER CITY OF TORONTO FOR A STRONGER ONTARIO ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 CRÉANT UN TORONTO PLUS FORT POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS FORT

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 27, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 53, An Act to revise the City of Toronto Acts, 1997 (Nos. 1 and 2), to amend certain public Acts in relation to municipal powers and to repeal certain private Acts relating to the City of Toronto / Projet de loi 53, Loi révisant les lois de 1997 Nos 1 et 2 sur la cité de Toronto, modifiant certaines lois d'intérêt public en ce qui concerne les pouvoirs municipaux et abrogeant certaines lois d'intérêt privé se rapportant à la cité de Toronto.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I'm delighted to join the debate, continue the debate and lead the debate today. Off the bat, I would like to say that I will be sharing the 20 minutes allocated to our side with the member from Scarborough Southwest.

The initial debate this afternoon deals with Bill 53. It's a bill that finally, slowly, is finding its way through second reading here. I hope we can get to it sooner rather than later; it's only some 300 pages.

It's a very comprehensive bill. I can't in all honesty say that I will be doing a very thorough job in 10 minutes—splitting the 20 minutes—in describing, more or less, the most important points of this particular proposed law. It deals with a revised act for the city of Toronto, which is the old 1997 act, and it has a number of amendments as well.

We have to recognize first of all how this bill got to this stage after first reading. Now we are doing second reading. I have to say that much of the work that has been done so far is thanks to the co-operation between the city and the province, and of course the initiative and willingness of the Premier, the government and the Minister of Municipal Affairs to really get to work on this particular piece of legislation. Because of their continued support for doing something for the city of Toronto, it was decided to move it forward. As I said, even though it does move a bit slowly, at least we are moving. It has taken some time—it has taken years, I would say—yet I'm very pleased to see that the McGuinty Liberal government has finally decided to give Toronto the power it needs to run its affairs, and in an appropriate manner as well.

While it has taken a long time, now we are dealing with second reading. At the end, I would like to say—and I say it now, as well—that I hope we can get through second reading speedily, give it approval and get on with the final debate on the bill.

I think we all recognize in this House the importance that it has, not only for the province of Ontario but for the city of Toronto as well. It is something that we all wanted, that the city has wanted. It has gone through very extensive consultations. I have to say that I believe it has been a year or maybe a couple of years now since we had consultations between the various interested groups and agencies from the city of Toronto and members from our side here, from the government. I know I attended an evening at Etobicoke Collegiate, where the consultations took place. I have to say that this particular bill, Bill 53, has wide support, not only from the members of the House and the various agencies but politicians as well.

1600

The minister and the Premier have recognized how important it is to have Toronto work, and work well. I don't want to be either ironic or sarcastic, but some time ago, some years ago, Toronto was recognized as the city that works. In many ways, I'd like to say that Toronto still works, but it could work better. And I think this will go a long way in allowing the city, the mayor and the members of city council to really conduct affairs in a responsible way, accountable to the citizens of Toronto. Why is that? Why have we recognized the importance of allowing Toronto to have these new powers? I don't have to say that if Toronto works well, I think the province of Ontario works well as well. And so it should. This is recognized by everybody who has been working to get the bill to this particular point.

So yes, having lauded the work and the support from the Premier and the minister and all the others involved, I would say just a couple of things, because I have less than four minutes left. What does this bill do? Some of the most important things, especially in parts IV, V and VII, deal with transparency at the municipal level, at the city level; accountability; changing a number of provisions; and revisions as well. One of those things is adding additional duties, responsibilities and powers to the city.

Part IV, for example, deals with governance and the framework, the structures. The city will have—saving time, if you will—the power to deal with changes in boundaries and wards and council composition and structures as well; the power to create boards and commissions, and how they will do that. But one very important aspect is accountability and transparency, how they run city business. They will have to provide for the establishment of a mechanism and an office relating to the accountability of the city; establishing a code of conduct for members of council and members of some boards as well.

Bill 53 calls for the appointment of an integrity commissioner. We have one, the feds have one, and I believe it's time the city gets serious, appointing an integrity commissioner, and as an ombudsman as well, who has the power to conduct investigations with respect to city affairs and so forth.

Another very major aspect included in the bill is that the act requires the city to appoint an Auditor General.

We have seen in the last few years the very important necessity to have an Auditor General who will have access to records and information.

Quickly, one of the other parts of the bill, part VII, deals with financing and administration. This, again, includes the administration of the city and boards; and the budget process, which is a very important part of running the city and running it in a very efficient way. It does require an annual return, containing financial information, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and also requires the city to prepare and publish annual statements.

While we have recognized the importance of giving the city these new powers and new authorities, we also are saying to the city that we want to see good government, we want to see transparency from the city of Toronto, and we are going to give them the tools to make sure that the city of Toronto can run well, in a very successful way, because we feel that if Toronto runs well, it's leading the province of Ontario to run well.

I'm down to my last minute, Mr. Speaker. I have to say to the Premier and the minister, thanks for spearheading this bill, for bringing it to the House in a very fast way. It's moving through the process. Unfortunately, the process is such that everybody has to have a say in it.

Recognizing that, I will do my share today and maybe we'll have a bit more time on third reading, unless we want to move the bill in a very fast way and get on with it, and then we can say to the city of Toronto, "Here you are. Now we have given you the power and authority you've been seeking. You're on your own. Let's see where you're going to take us from here." Having said that, I will terminate my 10 minutes and pass it along to my colleague from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I want to thank the member from York West for sharing his time with me and giving me a few minutes to speak on the bill in front of us today, Bill 53, An Act to revise the City of Toronto Acts, 1997 (Nos. 1 and 2), to amend certain public Acts in relation to municipal powers and to repeal certain private Acts relating to the City of Toronto. It's a pretty large bill. It's a pretty thick document that we have in front of us today. It's quite significant because it really brings about a landmark or watershed in terms of provincial-municipal relationships, at least with the city of Toronto and province of Ontario.

As a former city councillor of the city of Toronto, this is something that I myself have to say personally on behalf of the people Scarborough Southwest, Toronto and the Toronto area, that we're very happy to see a bill that gives the city of Toronto a number of powers and rights to do things it couldn't do before.

Before I speak any further on that, I just want to put into the record a little bit about the past. When I was on city council, there was a little bit of acrimony—actually quite a lot of acrimony—that existed between the city and the province of Ontario. At the time, all sorts of things were going on in Toronto. Proposals were being put forward to separate Toronto from the rest of Ontario.

The mayor at the time, Mel Lastman, even suggested that we should create our own province and that the people of Toronto should separate from the rest of Ontario. These ideas were perhaps a little bit far-fetched, but they just illustrated the severity of the situation and the downloading and the way that Toronto was being treated in respect of the rest of the province, with respect to how the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves governments wanted to treat us at the time.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Like the Cold War.

Mr. Berardinetti: As my colleague from Scarborough Centre has said, it was almost a cold war, very similar to the Cold War in many ways.

I want to read into the record a Toronto Star article—and actually the Toronto Star did support amalgamation when it occurred back in 1997. There was an article that came out Friday, May 12, 2000, and I just want to read a little bit of this into the record. I'll give a copy to Hansard as well.

"Download Debate Heats Up.

"Lastman Puts Cost to City at \$251.7 million; Harris Puts it at Zero.

"A day after Premier Mike Harris fired off an angry letter to the city of Toronto, Mayor Mel Lastman said an auditor will be hired to prove provincial downloading is costing the city \$251.7 million annually.

"I know what I'm talking about, and my figures are right to the penny," Lastman said in an interview yesterday.

"Definitely, he (Harris) is not getting the right information. I think he's being misled by being given the wrong figures," Lastman said.

"We're going to get an auditor and we're going to get all the figures audited and let (Harris) fight with the auditor—and let him say the world is wrong and he's right."

"Lastman said finance department figures show the rearrangement of services that were covered by the city and the province before amalgamation costs the city \$251.7 million.

"Big-ticket items include provincially owned social housing and 50% of GO Transit funding.

"In addition, the federal government has forced the city to pay about \$35 million annually of the cost of settling refugees, including health services such as tuberculosis prevention. That brings the total to almost \$300 million a year, Lastman said.

"In a letter to Lastman earlier this week, Harris scolded the mayor for complaining about the lack of provincial funding for public transit and continued complaints about the burden the province has placed on the city.

"I have often heard you use the term "downloading," a term that is neither accurate nor fair," Harris wrote.

1610

"Yesterday, Harris said the city should be thanking the province instead of complaining.

“Toronto was dying when we took office (in 1995); it’s now booming, it’s now leading Canada and indeed the province,” Harris said yesterday.

“Some pre-electioneering of some politicians in Toronto seem to be indicating it was hard done by under our government, and the facts are, Toronto is doing very well,” he said.

“He said no independent audit is going to prove otherwise.” I wonder why.

“Harris also wrote that municipalities, through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, asked the province to give them total funding responsibility for public transit.

“But Pat Moyle, the group’s executive director, stated flatly to city council that Harris was wrong. Moyle said president Michael Power was ‘extremely disappointed and very distressed’ by the letter.

“In a response to the letter yesterday, Lastman said he supports ‘a new partnership with our great province and our great country to alleviate some of the horrendous funding pressures on Canada’s largest city.’

“While stating he doesn’t back secession, Lastman said he doesn’t want the city to stay a ‘municipal marionette.’

“He said he would support putting the concept of a city state as a referendum question on the November ballot.

“After debating the issue of a referendum question on secession or a city state yesterday, councillors deferred the debate for a future meeting.

“But Harris made it clear the province would not permit such a question.

“No, I’m not going to have a referendum on busting up Canada.”

This is the sort of language, this is the sort of diatribe, this is the sort of debate that occurred not too long ago—six years ago. Looking back on those days, they were very dark days indeed. We at city council were extremely frustrated in trying to find a solution. Here we are in 2006, and I don’t need to list all the accomplishments that in two years have basically undone over five years of Harris-Eves damage, in particular around the years 1999, 2000 and 2001.

One of the biggest things was that we don’t see the fighting anymore, the acrimony between the mayor and the Premier. Premier McGuinty has forged a very strong and good relationship with Mayor Miller here in Toronto. The two talk regularly, discuss issues regularly, don’t fight it out through the media, don’t call each other names through the media but actually sit down. This is something new, something that I thought would almost never happen and never did happen during the Harris-Eves era. It was almost as if we were being talked to like little school children by Mr. Harris. I’m not saying that every single Tory was that way. I think that some Tories were sympathetic to the city of Toronto.

Interjection: Not many.

Mr. Berardinetti: Not many, but there were some.

Generally speaking, the Premier and his Minister of Municipal Affairs—first Al Leach, later followed by Steve Gilchrist, who I think lasted a couple of months, if I’m not mistaken, and then he was replaced by somebody else, I think Tony Clement, who came out with a wonderful solution: “You know what? I know how to fix Toronto. Reduce the size of your council. Make it smaller.” It was kind of like what Mike Harris has done around here: Trashed the pensions, made the energy around here so polarized that that air of friendship or camaraderie is gone between the politicians here at this level, from what I hear used to exist in the past. I think the poisoned pill was dropped when Mike Harris was in government. He did it and he could kick and pick on one of the easiest targets, which was the city of Toronto, and now we’ve seen the turnaround.

We see two cents per litre now being given to public transit. We saw a budget last week, and some might say it’s a Toronto-centric budget, but do you know what? It’s a budget that addresses issues for Toronto that were completely overlooked for several years. If you want to kick around Toronto, go ahead and kick it around. I know that some guys love to kick around the city of Toronto. But if you don’t have the city of Toronto, you’re not going to have a successful Ontario. The same is true with any major state or any major country. If you’re going to kick around London, you’re not going to have a successful England. If you’re going to kick around Paris, you’re not going to have a successful France. If you’re going to kick around New York City, you’re not going to have a successful New York state. But for some reason, Toronto-bashing seems to be, and was, in fashion back in 2000-01.

Toronto now is working with the Ontario government. The Premier, Minister Gerretsen and the parliamentary assistant, my friend Brad Duguid, are all working very closely with the city of Toronto to make sure we don’t have that kind of acrimony anymore and to see what other kinds of relationships can be forged.

I wish I had more time to talk about the actual bill in front of us and some of the highlights, some of the powers that are now given to Toronto. These are things Mayor Miller has come out and said are good. You don’t hear too many councillors these days bashing the provincial government. The councillors may come from all different political stripes, but they generally acknowledge that the province of Ontario today, through the leadership of Premier McGuinty, has brought and forged a new relationship.

In this act in front of us today, Bill 53, in all sorts of sections, the relationship between Toronto and Ontario is reviewed. Perhaps at some point in the future I can talk about it, but it’s everything from allowing the city to deal more with some simple things like allowing businesses—to bring business into the city; under section 82, the city is authorized to provide financial incentives to commercial enterprises. This is something good. The act itself is good and I support it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to take part in the debate this afternoon and respond to a few of the comments. To begin with, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Christine Elliott and Lisa Macleod, our two newly elected Progressive Conservative members of our caucus—they'll be sworn in in a few days' time, I understand—and the NDP on the election of Peter Tabuns. During this great election, I had the opportunity to spend some time in Toronto.

Listening to the most recent member's comments on the City of Toronto Act, of course, he spent most of his time picking on Mike Harris. You would think that after three years in government, they would have something else to talk about except Mike Harris at this point. The one thing that's incredible is that you were opposed to the annexation of the six cities that formed the city of Toronto, yet if it was such a bad thing, you'd think they would remove that annexation and let it go back to the original system. Wouldn't that be a real, true leader, if Mike Harris did such a bad job? But oh, no. What they're afraid to say is that Mike Harris had the courage to amalgamate the city; they never would have. And they don't have the courage to un-amalgamate it because they know it was the right thing to do. That's the problem. It was the right thing to do, and I congratulate former Premier Harris on a job well done in forming that amalgamation. It was the right thing to do, he had the courage to do it, and that's the way Conservatives do things. They have the courage to make these kinds of steps.

It's unfortunate that they can stand here and bitterly pick on Mike Harris and talk all they want for question period after question period and statement after statement, but they don't have the courage to make any changes.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments made by Liberal members, I've got to tell you that Bill 53 tinkers around the edges of what needs to be done with respect to the city of Toronto—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Sorry to interrupt. Member for Nickel Belt.

Ms. Martel: Bill 53 tinkers around the edges of the real problems that are facing the city of Toronto, and indeed these are the same problems that are facing so many cities right across, and that's the problem of the download, which has not been resolved by this government. David Crombie said on December 5, 2005:

"When the Harris government downloaded social services and social housing, I said at the time that it was wrong in principle and disastrous in practice. It is still the case, and it would be a responsible action for the current government to upload both these services to restore the balance."

After three years in government, you would think that this government would start to make some significant moves to do that, but the reality is, and AMO pointed this out very well this summer, that too many property taxpayers continue to pay for soft services, for social services, for health services that are the responsibility of the provincial government. AMO said it very clearly:

"Ontario is the only province in Canada where municipal property taxes are used to subsidize provincial health and social services programs, like welfare and employment services, disability benefits, drug benefits, social housing, child care, homes for the aged, public health and ambulance services...."

"Municipal governments in Ontario spend over \$8 billion a year on provincial health and social service programs. That's about one third of total municipal operating expenditures of \$23 billion a year. When you subtract provincial cost-sharing for some of these programs, federal contributions and user charges, the net municipal subsidy paid toward provincial health and social services programs is more than \$3 billion a year."

That's the significant problem facing the city of Toronto: the refusal of this government to upload some of those downloaded services that they talk so much about. If you did that, there would be a significant positive change here in this city.

1620

Mr. Duguid: I listened carefully to the speeches made both by the member for York West and the member for Scarborough Southwest. I want to thank them for the contribution they've made to this debate, but more importantly, for the dedication and commitment they've had to their city of Toronto. They've both been very, very important in terms of the development of this policy, and have both played an important role in the change that we've seen in the relationship between Toronto and the province of Ontario. That change has made a difference already in the quality of life that the people in the city of Toronto enjoy. That change has made a difference already in the quality of life because of the fact that Toronto often drives economically much of what goes on in the province and the quality of life of each and every Ontarian. I want to thank them for the contribution they've made.

Indeed, this legislation will change that relationship even further. It recognizes Toronto as a mature level of government. It ensures that Toronto has the revenue-generating tools that it will need to move forward and compete with other cities its size internationally. It ensures that they have access to the powers, the independence, the ability and the autonomy that Toronto needs to make autonomous and important decisions, so that they don't always have to come cap in hand to city hall for assistance with regard to decision-making. It also ensures greater accountability, which is a very important part of the puzzle.

I was a member of Toronto council for nine years prior to coming here. I can tell you that they were dark times, that Toronto was subjected to many years of downloading. This last budget is just the last example, as we've gone through and changed that relationship, where we've really turned things right around in the city of Toronto. This government has been good news for this city, and I'm very proud to be part of it.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Responding to the member from Scarborough Southwest, it's regrettable he didn't devote more time to the legislation; he focused on attacking the previous government and the previous Premier. That's regrettable. I don't recall that member referencing Toronto issues on a very regular basis. In fact, he's known best around this place for attempting to regulate the price of haircuts. I think it may be based on the fact that we found out the Premier is paying over \$50 for his haircuts. Maybe that was the catalyst for the bill to regulate haircuts and hairdressers.

What we might expect next from this member, perhaps, is to regulate the price of homes in Forest Hill, because we learned not too long ago that the Premier is now residing in a \$1-million-plus mansion—I should say “taxpayer-funded mansion”—in Forest Hill, paid for by the Liberal Party of Ontario with contributions from people right across the province. We know that the Premier now also has a chauffeur-driven limousine to transport him back and forth, and when the traffic is too bad on the way to Hamilton, he gets a government-funded, taxpayer-funded plane to fly him over the gridlock to Hamilton to attend a meeting.

In contrast, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, Mr. John Tory, has stood up and fought for Toronto interests for so many years. He's a Toronto native. He was the chair of the Greater Toronto United Way. He was co-chair of the Toronto City Summit Alliance, which dealt with many of the issues related to the city of Toronto legislation that is before us today, and came up with suggestions and proposals on how to address the long-term future of this world-class, great city, a city that I've lived much of my life in now for the past 25 years as an MPP. I love this city; I love its neighbourhoods. So to deride the Progressive Conservative Party is unfortunate. We love this city. We want to see what's best for this great city of Toronto.

The Acting Speaker: One of the government members has two minutes to reply. I return to the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Berardinetti: I want to thank all members who provided some comments on the speech. I just want to remind the member from Leeds–Grenville that I did share my time with the member from York West, Mr. Sergio, and he did speak to the bill for 10 minutes.

You cannot help but say something about what Mike Harris did. It's not personal. It affects Toronto taxpayers to the millions of dollars. I heard it when I knocked on doors in Scarborough. Maybe up in Leeds–Grenville they didn't hear about it, but I sure as heck heard about it, and the people responded at election time.

If you want to talk about the bill, Toronto is going to have tools and it will have all sorts of flexibility that it didn't have before. It will be able to pass bylaws regarding all sorts of matters it couldn't before. It will have more accountability with a lobbyist registry and an Auditor General. It will change governance structures with new committees and boards. There will be land use planning with local appeal processes regulating sustain-

able design, business regulation, licensing, holiday store closing, fiscal issues, raising revenues, limitations on taxation, controlled demolition on housing and conversion of rental housing. These are just some of the areas which Toronto has been asking for powers for years to run as an effective city. So, yes, the bill is quite all-encompassing.

One can read the bill and see that it is all-encompassing and gives Toronto tremendous and much-needed resources, but at the same time one cannot forget the past. What happened in the past was absolutely incredible. It used up a lot of Toronto's energy. It pitted one group against another against another, which the Tories were famous for doing. Those days are over and we now have peace between Toronto and Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I wanted to speak to this bill because I'm from Toronto, as the members know, and because I've had a keen interest in these issues for some time. People assume sometimes that when you come into politics, that's the first time you cared about a lot of the public policy issues affecting Toronto or anything else, but as the member for Leeds–Grenville made reference, I've had a deep and abiding interest in issues affecting this community and its governance for some considerable period of time. Indeed, I probably became aware of some of the concerns about how Toronto is governed and some of the needs that Toronto has, some of the special needs that some of our special neighbourhoods have, when I was involved for many years with the United Way, culminating in service as its chair for one year and as its major gifts chair for many years.

I think it was as well the initiative that I took, together with three other people, to pull together the Toronto City Summit Alliance, which was the first time in many, many years we had brought together all kinds of decision-makers from Toronto: politicians, business people, social activists and others. That led to the Toronto City Summit Alliance that exists today and of which, again, I was one of the first co-chairs. That in turn led to a lot of the initial discussions that took place with respect to the need for governance reform in Toronto and to the establishment of something like MARS and the Toronto Region Research Alliance. A lot of things that have happened since then arose out of those discussions, of which I was very proud to be a part. So to stand and speak to this legislation is something that is important to me and has been important to me for some time.

I always like to start, as I said in my reply speech to the budget, on a positive note. I think that indeed some of the steps have been taken in putting together this bill to address the need for some greater autonomy on the part of the city and some of its decision-making. I think in particular of the kinds of decisions that required previously an application here for a private bill, which necessitated the city to spend money on advertising and wait in a long queue to get things like speed bumps, and even a lobbyist registry. I ran for mayor saying that there would have to be one established, and I thought it was

appalling that you had to come up here, cap in hand, to plead for permission to establish a lobbyist registry for the city of Toronto when you're dealing with a very sophisticated government in a very large city. Some of those issues are being addressed.

The government, upon introduction of this bill, made a great deal of the fact that it is addressing some of the accountability issues through the establishment of an auditor and an Integrity Commissioner for the city. I include that reluctantly in the category of good news only because they're really trying to take credit for legislative provisions that are being put in here to confirm offices that have been created for some time now, within the city government, by itself. As usual, there is less than meets the eye when you take a look at this legislation from the McGuinty Liberal government in terms of really addressing some of these issues of autonomy. But the fact that those things are confirmed here—and some of these decisions used to take up, and still do, a lot of time at the city and are delayed months and years on end while they wait in some queue here, cap in hand—is a step forward.

1630

There are a number of things one could say, however, where this piece of legislation and indeed the process that led to it fall well short. I said on the day it was introduced that I was very concerned that the government had gone about the process backwards. I want to repeat some of those comments today, only because I really believe they have made a mistake in the way they have gone about this and in doing it backwards, as I say.

A number of the commentators, whether it be the board of trade or others in the newspapers, have talked about the fact that the accountability that goes with increased responsibility should at least have been dealt with concurrently with this bill. But it has not been, I regret to say. That should be of concern to taxpayers who are watching out there. It should be of concern to this government. We all know they talked a lot about accountability before the election, but when it came time to actually deliver on accountability on any front, we've seen that they forgot a lot of what they said before the election—and that's being charitable, to say they forgot about it.

The accountability should have been dealt with concurrently, and it has not. In fact, we're going to find, if this bill is passed, that powers to tax—and I'm going to talk about that—are going to be given to the city before any changes have been made in the accountability, and especially accountability as it relates to the governance structure of the city. In fact, we're going to have a municipal election before any of those kinds of governance changes are dealt with, and I think that's a mistake.

The way I think this should have been dealt with, if you had wanted to do it in a way that was respectful of the taxpayers, that was going to quantify the nature and scope of the problem and deal with this in a businesslike way, is that the first thing the government should have done—and I agree with the member for Nickel Belt. She

commented a few moments ago on the fact that the elephant, as I described it, that's sitting in the room and that wasn't addressed during the preparation of this bill—nobody spoke to the elephant and nobody even acknowledged the elephant was there—is the fiscal imbalance that exists between the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario.

While there have been various estimates over time as to what the scope of that fiscal imbalance is, we see estimates that change almost every day. Now they're projecting the scope of the fiscal imbalance for next year as \$400 million. This year, we heard it was \$500 million-plus. Of course, the bottom line is that it has led to this annual circus we've seen that has gone on for years and years now. Again, Mr. McGuinty was, as I described him in the case of the college teachers' strike, Mr. Big Talk when it came to saying he was going to do away with that and that this was a terrible scandal. Indeed, we've heard a lot of talk from our friends in the Liberal caucus this very afternoon about all the evils that were foisted upon the city of Toronto and its residents by the previous government, and yet many of the things they would decry, and have decried here this afternoon, Mr. McGuinty and his government have done absolutely nothing about. They talked about it a lot in the run-up to the election, they talked about it for years before that, and they have done nothing about it.

The first thing they should have done, I would say with respect, is quantify; have somebody who is not partisan in this, who is not an interested party, sit down and say, "Once and for all, let's quantify this number that seems to float up and down depending on what month of the year it is or who the budget chief at city hall is or who the mayor is or who the minister up here is, and so on."

Having done that, I think then it was incumbent on the government, as my friend from Leeds-Grenville pointed out—I think it was him or maybe it was the member for Nickel Belt. That's a hard distinction to make between the two, I know. But one of the previous speakers said that it's not just Toronto that faces these issues of a fiscal imbalance between the province and the cities. It was incumbent upon this government, especially having talked so much about it, to quantify the problem and then, on a province-wide basis, I would suggest, to address what it was going to do to address the whole question of the fiscal imbalance, even if it was a plan that was going to go out four or five years.

Then, when you had done both of those things, which is to quantify the Toronto problem, put forward a province-wide solution that could address whatever one was prepared to address in terms of the downloading, and upload some things or change the fiscal arrangements between the cities and the provincial government, you would see what you had left in terms of a financial problem. Make no mistake: The governance part of this—there were really three aspects to this problem, at least three significant ones. One was accountability, transparency and maintenance of integrity in standards, which are dealt with through the auditor and the integrity

commissioner; changes that will ultimately happen to the city governance structure and so on, which I was arguing a moment ago should have happened now as opposed to later. Two was the issue of the fiscal imbalance and that that has to be addressed as well.

I think we've done this backwards. I have suggested as well that at the same time that the province developed a solution to the overall fiscal imbalance between itself and the cities, the city of Toronto in particular, a big, \$7-billion government, should have been required concurrently, while this exercise was going on, to do what I describe as some combination of a program review and/or a value-for-money audit.

I say that because I think what happened in the aftermath of the amalgamation, quite frankly—and we can debate all day whether the amalgamation should or should not have happened. The comments that the member for Simcoe North made were absolutely correct. If, as the member for Don Valley West says, there can't be a single citizen left in the city of Toronto who believes that amalgamation was a good thing, then I would think it would be an easy political act for this government to decide that they were going to bring forward legislation to undo the amalgamation. It would be a wildly popular thing that would guarantee the re-election of all incumbent members. Since we don't have any at the present time—we will after 2007—this would be a great thing for them to do. If they believe that it was wrong, if they believe it's wildly popular, then they should proceed to have the courage of their convictions and do it. But of course they won't do it because they never have the courage of their convictions and because they know, as the member for Don Valley West knows, that it's simply not true that there isn't a citizen in Toronto—the fault here lies in the fact that the steps were not taken by those concerned, throughout the time between the amalgamation and today, to achieve some of the efficiencies and to do some of the things that could be done with the city of Toronto government to make sure it runs in a way that all taxpayers could be confident respects the best value for their money and the most efficient kind of government they could see anywhere in Canada.

I was saying, when I was speaking somewhere the other day, that I remember standing in the middle of Marlee Avenue when I was running for mayor in 2003 and pointing out that on one side of the street the garbage was being collected for \$74 a tonne, and on the other side of the street for I think \$35 a tonne or some such number—a huge discrepancy. Of course, on the west side of the street it was collected by the private sector and on the east side by the public sector. I didn't even advocate on that day that you should turn the whole thing over to the private sector or that you should cause anybody who worked for the city to have to take an adjustment to their wages. I simply said that there was a responsibility that exists with the people in government to address a discrepancy like that and insist that the side that is spending \$74 a tonne to get the job done be told, “You can't spend that much. There are other people who have proven that

it can be done for less. Bring yourself closer to that number, whether it's by changing your work habits—if you want to contract it out, go ahead and do it,” and so on. What do we see them doing today? In fact, I think they're closing down some of those contracts that were doing it for a lot less and repatriating that work to the city's public service at, from what I gather, from what I read, what will be an increased cost. It doesn't make any sense.

I think it was necessary for people to see that this value-for-money audit and this program review were done on a line-by-line basis, and indeed that's supported by the board of trade. It's supported by others who said that you had to address the issue of accountability in this city government before you moved to give them the power to increase taxes. Indeed, I believe this was recognized by no one less than the previous Minister of Finance, Mr. Sorbara, the member for Vaughan–King–Aurora, who, it was well noted, was slowing down the emergence of this bill out of cabinet into the Legislature because he had concerns about giving new taxing powers to the city of Toronto. I think that's because he recognized, first of all, that the taxpayers generally—and I think most of them watching, and just about anybody else who isn't watching—would agree that they are paying enough tax. They're paying enough tax in total. I think their view would be that if the governments got their act together collectively and made more with the money they had—achieved efficiencies, really focused on value for money—then the governments could do a lot better with what they had before they started worrying about raising taxes.

I note with interest that the Toronto Star makes reference on March 29—Royson James—to the fact that the city of Toronto has had a 21% increase in its spending in three years and that the total of that increased spending is more than the entire annual budgets of Mississauga, Brampton, Vaughan, Markham, Oakville, Richmond Hill and Pickering combined. They point out that the city has increased its spending in the current administration by \$436 million a year. They go on to talk about the fact that this has consisted of things like principal and interest payments on the city's debt, up \$93 million over that time; facilities and real estate costs up \$32 million; waste management up \$26 million; and IT costs up \$10 million.

This is an article that comes from Karen Stintz, one of the city councillors, written in the National Post. She says, “Servicing the city's debt is now the third-highest line item. For the third straight year, the city has failed to make its required contribution to finance employee benefits. Even if the city adds no new spending to its budget next year, it will be faced with a \$291-million shortfall as a result of debt charges and the implications of depleting reserve funds and selling fixed assets to cover operating expenditures.”

She goes on to say, “The board of trade presented the mayor with a list of practical measures that would help the city be financially sustainable and independent of the province.”

It goes on to say, "One senior civil servant has also proposed strategies to review each department's base budget to determine how to become more efficient. Both strategies need to be reviewed before the city goes begging to other levels of government for additional funds. Toronto residents demand that their civic leaders are accountable and responsible for the allocation of their tax dollars."

1640

The Toronto Star said in its editorial on December 29, after this bill was introduced, "Before Toronto can assume new powers, its leaders must be made more accountable. The existing, dysfunctional system at city hall is, frankly, an embarrassment.

"Importantly, this issue has consequences beyond the city's borders." It goes on to talk about how this will set the pattern for new rules that are going to be in place.

Now, what has the government done? Did they actually, first of all, quantify the nature of the problem and address this \$300-, \$400-, or \$500-million shortfall the city has every year because of the provincial and city fiscal imbalance? No, they did not. Did they take a look at the notion of saying, "We're going to introduce this legislation, and while it makes its way through the Legislature and takes effect, we're going to insist that you do a value-for-money audit and a program review and present us—all of us: the taxpayers, the legislators, the city councillors and so on—with the results of that kind of review so that the taxpayers can see the kinds of measures that could be taken in a \$7-billion government to achieve those kinds of efficiencies without raising taxes?" No, they did not.

What did they do? They did the same thing Mr. McGuinty always does. Interestingly enough, it's exactly the thing he promised he would never do but the thing he always does: He turns to the taxpayers first. In the city of Toronto they're going to get the same thing, courtesy of Dalton McGuinty, they've had everywhere else: Pay more and get less. He has introduced a piece of legislation here that turned first to the taxpayers for more money and said, "We believe the solution here is to create new powers to tax, so that now drinks and land transfer tax"—let's go through what's in here.

A tax on alcohol: I would say the tourism industry and the hospitality industry are already struggling across the province and the city of Toronto. They will tell you that. I saw the hotel association person at a board of trade reception in this building last week, and he said they're still struggling. Add a tax to the drinks, and you're simply going to make it harder for them to do business.

A tax on entertainment: Last time I checked, some of the theatre companies in Toronto are having a hard enough time making ends meet. But if you just raise the price of the tickets in order to deal with this issue, as opposed to looking for efficiencies, you're going to make life tougher for them.

How about a surtax on the current land transfer tax? That will raise the price of housing so that young people

looking for a new house or a new condominium will find they are going to have to pay more for their housing.

Then, of course, there's speculation on whether we could have a congestion charge, whether we could have some sort of additional vehicle charge and so on. Indeed, when you look at this legislation, they have gone to "Tax first and worry about the rest later," which I don't think is correct.

There are a lot of other things in here that are worrisome, because not only have they gone to "Tax first and look for efficiencies later; tax first and look for accountability later; tax first and worry about governance later," but they have given very broad new powers to license. Mark my words: I think that before it's all said and done, we will see, particularly in the absence of meaningful changes to governance, a city government that will not be able to restrain itself from imposing additional licences and requirements for licences on people like landlords, where each apartment will have to have a licence and the licence fee will simply be passed through to the tenants. They'll say, "No, it's not really a tax. The city did it," and so on, but they're giving them the power to do these kinds of things. The last thing, I would argue, that most businesses trying to carry on here in this city need is more red tape, more licence applications to fill out, more licence fees to pay and so on, but that's what's been done.

I should point out that there are a number of sections in here, if you look at them carefully, where again there's the same kind of sleight of hand that was done in the LHIN legislation and elsewhere. In the LHIN legislation, as we'll all recall, they said, "All the autonomy and all the advice-giving power is going to local people." Then when you actually look at the legislation, you find that really all the power is going to the minister so that he can make decisions to close hospitals and cut off services and so forth. If you check this bill out carefully, you'll see that the broad powers given in sections 7 and 8 and elsewhere are in fact subject later on to clauses that say the minister and the Lieutenant Governor in Council can basically override all of those powers that are given to the city. So this is in some respects a mirage that I think is being presented to the city councillors and that they were so happy about. I think they will come to know what we've all come to know very well up here at Queen's Park, namely, that he who maketh the promises is the same one who also breaketh, and that he who giveth will be the same person who taketh away, in the person of none other than the very same Mr. Dalton McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario.

We have suggested, and I think it's a constructive suggestion, that the government still has the time to do this right. They could still get somebody to quantify the scope of the fiscal imbalance between the city and the province. They could then get somebody to independently go in and do the value-for-money audit and program review within the city government. It's not a bad time to do it, with a municipal election coming up later this year. They could delay the proclamation: I made the

suggestion quite a while ago that they could delay the proclamation of the taxing power sections of this bill so that you are sure no one on city council anywhere is going to turn to the power to tax and take more money out of people's pockets before they first look at what they are doing and how they are spending existing money.

It's disappointing to me to conclude that the right thing to do here was to introduce a City of Toronto Act—there's no question that one was necessary—and to do some of the right things, such as creating some of the autonomy the city needs to make some of its own decisions on things like an integrity commissioner, an auditor, a lobbyist registry, speed bumps and all those sorts of things. At the same time, that has been counter-balanced by a failure to do this right and by the usual McGuinty Liberal resort to the taxpayers' pockets first, to simply reach in and take more money out before requiring that there be not only more accountability but a value-for-money audit, that there be a proper program review to make sure the city is spending the money it presently has in a more efficient manner.

I regret that very much because I think that had it been done the right way, people would have known they were getting better government and better value for their tax dollars. They would have known they were going to get a real commitment from this government to address the fiscal imbalance, not just for Toronto but for all cities across Ontario. We have a failure on all those accounts and I think that's an unfortunate missed opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): The comments made by the Leader of the Opposition were very instructive in terms of his review of the legislation. I can tell you that the NDP critic for this area is Michael Prue, and he spent some time analyzing this bill as well. A little later on this evening, I'll have the opportunity myself to speak to some of the issues we found to be problematic with the bill.

One of them is exactly the same one on which the previous speaker spoke, and that is the issue of the extent to which these powers really exist, the extent to which the bill actually provides override capacity for the Premier and cabinet to perhaps suffer the ideas that come from the council, but if they're not well received and not something the government of Ontario supports, they can prevent those things from happening. Although there is an appearance of more power, particularly around governance and structural issues, in fact the power still remains with the government of Ontario.

There are many other concerns, not only those raised by Michael Prue in his discussion around the fiscal problems the city of Toronto faces, but coming from the city of Hamilton, those very same fiscal problems exist as a result of the downloading that needs to be fixed. Unfortunately, the government didn't fix that in Bill 53 for the city of Toronto, and as we just saw in the budget introduced by this government, they didn't fix it for anybody else, either. I'll be spending some time talking about that as well because it's of great concern.

Finally is the issue around the consultation that was apparently taking place with Toronto and other municipalities that this government is so proud of, and yet walking the streets of Toronto–Danforth recently in the by-election, we were hearing from people that they're very concerned about the government's lack of consultation in terms of their response to the mega-power plant project on the port lands.

Mr. Duguid: I listened very carefully to the Leader of the Opposition's comments. There was a time when I thought the Leader of the Opposition might have understood a little bit about Toronto, but from what I can see here today, he has entered into the politics of trying to have it both ways. When he talked about structural changes for the city of Toronto, he talked as though we should be imposing those structural changes without giving the city itself an opportunity to consult with its people and reach a reasonable conclusion. All that is a throwback to the Harris days: impose, impose, impose. That's not what this government is about. This government is about working with the city, improving the way the city works.

1650

Will we hold them accountable? Yes, you're absolutely right. In this legislation, we ensure that there's a regulatory ability for the minister to step in at the appropriate time, if he needs to. But we have confidence in the city. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we believe in the city. We know that our city councillors are there for the right reasons and we think they'll get the job done.

The Leader of the Opposition, as if admitting that the previous government imposed many evil, anti-Toronto policies on the city, indicated that we've done—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Evil?

Mr. Duguid: That's the word that your leader used: "evil" policies. He said that we're not doing much to undo those. Where has he been over the last two years? We've just passed a budget, a budget that he did not support, that improves public transit incredibly: over \$800 million to get a subway line is going in the city; over \$1 billion going to the TTC; \$200 million going to the city of Toronto through the TTC. Did he support that? No, he didn't. Over \$132 million a year will be going through the gas tax. We'll be making that more flexible for the city. Uploading of public health costs, uploading of land ambulance costs—these are tangible things that this government has done to improve things in the city of Toronto. For the Leader of the Opposition to say that we've done nothing to back off his terrible legacy and the legacy of—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): First of all, I'd just like to say that unlike the Premier, our leader has not got a helicopter to take him to a meeting that he has to go to in Oshawa; in fact, he will be on the GO train.

I want to take a moment to first of all comment as a GTA member on this piece of legislation. At the same time, I probably have a fairly unique position as well, as

a third-generation Torontonians. Having lived my formative years in Toronto, I have certainly always had a sense of the destiny that Toronto could have. When you look at the years from 1995 to 2003, there were opportunities made to in fact create that world-class urban centre. When you look at the arts endowment, when you look at the SuperBuild initiatives, these were all designed to bring Toronto into that world-class development.

But, as our leader has mentioned, this bill leaves out the taxpayers' perspective. The taxpayers are most interested in accountability and transparency; these are missing. One of the notions about the taxing powers of this bill is to create instant inequities. Other communities are going to look at this and say, "Why not me?" The danger, then, of Toronto having that power is that it creates the kind of circumstances that go to creating the hole in the doughnut.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): In response to the member, I heard some reference made to how people travel and everything, and consultation. I'm just wondering whether the leader of the Conservative Party, John Tory, will be taking the GO train to the "Up-Close and Personal" cocktail reception on Thursday night at the Bayview Golf and Country Club at 25 Fairway Heights Drive in Thornhill. You would know that it costs \$1,000 a person to go.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: First of all, I promised the Leader of the Opposition that I would advertise this for him as part of my response. He said yes, he needs the advertising for it. It says:

"We are pleased to host, once again, an 'Up Close and Personal' cocktail reception in honour of John Tory, leader of the Ontario PC Party.... This event will be held on Thursday, April 6, 2006, at the Bayview Golf and Country Club ... Thornhill, from 6 to 8 p.m.

"Last year's reception was a tremendous success, especially as all in attendance had an opportunity to speak to Mr. Tory. This year, Mr. Tory will be available again for personal discussion and is most interested in hearing your concerns and issues. Your continued support will enable ... us to play a major role in ensuring that Mr. Tory becomes the next Premier of Ontario."

Applause.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: That's where you're supposed to applaud. "Please confirm your attendance to this intimate event by March 10, 2006.

"To reserve ... tickets at \$1,000 each, please call Annette Skamis at 416-495-0375.... Cheques should be made payable to PC Ontario Fund and forwarded to the address below."

This is from Paul Bailey, president of Bazil Developments Inc. He's the co-chair of the dinner.

Now, I know there will be consultation. The Leader of the Opposition promised consultation. I promised to him I would advertise this particular event on his behalf and I know that consultation, at \$1,000 apiece, will take place on Thursday evening.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to put some comments on the record regarding Bill 53, the Stronger City of Toronto for a Stronger Ontario Act, 2006. I wanted to start off by referring to some of the pieces that our critic, Michael Prue, outlined when he gave his speech on this particular bill. I wanted to do that because, of course, Michael Prue used to be one of the mayors that represented one of the former municipalities that is now a part of the city of Toronto. He was the mayor of East York. He not only represented that particular community for many years, but then was also elected to represent that area on the broader amalgamated city of Toronto council. So, when the member from Beaches–East York looked at Bill 53, he did so with a significant amount of experience from the perspective of both pre- and post-amalgamation, and pre- and post-download times.

I have to say that, coming from the city of Hamilton and having served on the city of Hamilton council at that same time frame, certainly having served prior to amalgamation and then prior to the downloading, I also have some insights that I'd like to share in the context of Bill 53, in terms of how other municipalities, one just down the highway, one of the ones that I represent, as well as others, experience these issues. It's because of these issues, particularly, that the pressure continued to rise until the province was forced to respond.

Unfortunately, the response is one that we have some problems with. The very first problem that the member for Beaches–East York raised in his comments was the very issue around the consultative process. I raise this because the government likes to talk about its success in engaging in consultation with municipalities around some of the issues that are difficult for them. In fact, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing spent some time waxing eloquent, I think is the way the member for Beaches–East York described it, around how wonderful this consultation was, and how productive and well-meaning and positive the consultation process was.

But I think it's important to put on the record some of the other comments around whether or not the city of Toronto always feels as though this consultation or this aura of co-operation that the government likes to describe is actual reality, or just happens to be once in a while taking effect. I read from the Hansard. The quote is from Michael Prue, but he's quoting another source on the consultation process, and here is what it says: "Ontario has been a leader in fostering a strong consultative relationship with its municipal sector. We believe that the relationship between the province and the city of Toronto should be one of ongoing reciprocal consultation. The city should be advised of proposed future provincial directions, and we would expect the city to consult with the province," on and on and on. So, in other words, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing put on the record in the Hansard this view of the relationship, this view of the consultative process, what anybody would only describe as a mature and productive way of having a conversation between the province and its largest municipi-

pality. Interestingly enough, anybody reading that out of context would think, “Gee, you know, that makes sense. That’s a good way of solving problems, a good way of making sure that everybody’s interests are clearly outlined and are on the table before such time as the problem can be solved.”

1700

Unfortunately, though, what we are seeing is a very selective application of those principles, a very selective application of that kind of dialogue, that kind of relationship that the minister claims to have with municipalities. In fact, the reality is, and it’s something that I learned very quickly when I was canvassing in the by-election in Toronto–Danforth, that relationship went out the door when it came to the issue of a mega-power plant that’s being planned for the port lands.

Although I personally have very little specific experience with that, I certainly heard from members of the Toronto–Danforth community, residents in that community as well as former representative Marilyn Churley, as well as people like the member for Beaches–East York and the member for Trinity–Spadina, very engaged Toronto members who are really quite concerned about that power plant. It’s interesting that the city of Toronto had come up with, through a very consultative process, through a very engaged community, a solution that they thought was the most appropriate for their community in terms of power generation. Unfortunately, the government decided to ignore all of the consultation that they so often talk about valuing when it was done between the city of Toronto and the community. They also devalue their own commitment to consultation when they turn around and impose their own solution that the residents of the Toronto–Danforth area are supposed to just embrace, notwithstanding the fact that their community had already come up an alternative that was much more appropriate.

So when we hear the government talk about things like a consultative process and respectful relationships and positive dialogue and all of these fancy words to describe the relationships that they apparently have with these other municipalities, you don’t need to dig very deep, you don’t need to scratch very much of the surface, to find out that in fact it’s nothing of the sort and that it’s not a consistent relationship. It just depends on whether the government feels like providing that consultation, feels like listening to the community, can be bothered or not to implement the solutions that come from the community level.

From my perspective, that’s a huge problem that the government has and it’s one that I have learned through the very serious and concerned voice of the residents of the Toronto–Danforth area, to be represented in this House very soon by one Peter Tabuns, who was elected in that riding, a very concerned criticism not only of the plan to pollute their neighbourhood with this plant that the government wants to put in place, but also concern that the government can so callously ignore the extensive work that was done to put together a solution at the

community level with the city of Toronto. So it’s not as if there had been nothing done. A great deal had been done; a great deal of effort had been made.

So the bottom line is this: If the government purports to respect consultation and consultative process and engagement in dialogue, then they should respect it at all turns, not just when it’s politically convenient or convenient, perhaps, for some other agenda they may have with people they may know who may operate certain facilities or not. The bottom line is, you can’t pick and choose and still call it a principle or a value that you hold. If you hold that value and that principle, then it needs to be apparent and obvious in every turn that you take and every activity that you undertake.

I thought it was important to raise that issue, because it’s really important that people understand that when they talk about this way of doing things, they don’t do it consistently. The government really does fall short in many areas.

There’s one other piece to this that I think is important. Bill 53 speaks to the issue of allowing these new powers for municipal council and the city of Toronto, allowing them to choose and create their own governance structure, allowing them to make decisions, in particular having the mayor make decisions around the establishment of committees, the chairing of standing committees and boards and agencies and who the chairs of those organizations will be, with the government through this bill indicating at the beginning of the bill or at certain sections of the bill that this is the new relationship of maturity and trust that they have with the city of Toronto and that the city of Toronto will do the right thing.

I heard the parliamentary assistant speak to that a few minutes ago: “We trust them and we think they are mature enough to make their own decisions.” You know what? You don’t need to failsafe that, and that’s what they’ve done. They’ve put in a failsafe that if, for some reason, the government of the day decides, if the Liberal government, the McGuinty government decides they don’t like what the city of Toronto is putting forward for its changes in governance—maybe politically they don’t like a mayor, not particularly this one but anyone in the future, maybe the government of any day isn’t in sync or doesn’t jibe with any mayor of the day in the city of Toronto—what Bill 53 allows for is the provincial government of the day to put the kibosh on any recommendations of governance change or other structural changes that the city of Toronto comes forward with.

How can you, on the one hand, say that you’re committed to cutting the apron strings, if you want to call it that, that you’re committed to letting them go out on their own, and then, on the other hand, say, “We reserve the right to tug them back if we don’t like what they’re doing.” It’s either one or the other. You can’t have it both ways. If the bill is supposed to be providing this broader opportunity for the city of Toronto’s elected officials to act independently, then they certainly don’t need to have that failsafe of being able to pull back on any decisions that come forward.

The other issue I wanted to get some time to talk about is what the government didn't do in Bill 53 and what the government has not yet done for the municipality of Toronto or any municipalities that are currently being crushed under the financial problems that exist because of unsolved downloading formulas that were put in place by the previous Harris government.

I have this document from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario on "Ontario's \$3-billion provincial-municipal fiscal gap." We often hear the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs talking about the federal-provincial fiscal gap. But what we have in the province of Ontario is a very significant and very severe provincial-municipal fiscal gap. In the city of Toronto, every budget year they come to the provincial government and say, "We need money because we simply can't afford to continue to pay for downloaded services because it's causing a crushing problem on our budget."

Guess what? The city of Toronto is not alone in that problem. The city of Hamilton has also got the same concerns. Every year, the city of Hamilton has been, I guess, lucky to get a few dollars thrown their way. In fact, this year, once again the city of Hamilton came, as did the city of Toronto, to ask the government to help with their budget. The reason they have to ask for this funding is because what is happening is that—it's interesting. If I recall correctly, in the city of Hamilton, when the Harris government downloaded, our staff identified at the time about a \$33-million gap in what the government of the day said was a revenue-neutral transaction. In fact, it wasn't revenue neutral for Hamilton. Hamilton was out by about \$33 million.

Finally, at the time, the government of the day acknowledged that and put into place a fund, the CRF—I can't remember what exactly the acronym stands for—community reinvestment fund. Anyway, the CRF was put in place to acknowledge that there is this funding gap. The problem is that, over time, the CRF dwindled and the funding gap stayed the same. In fact, what's happening now is that the funding gap is growing. So if this government was really interested not only in the autonomy of the municipality of the city Toronto but in the autonomy of all municipalities, they would really get at that funding formula problem. They would get at the fact that social services, particularly, should not be funded out of the property tax base.

1710

In fact, the city of Hamilton has done a great deal of work on that particular issue. I have in front of me a package that was sent by the mayor to myself and other local MPPs, as well as to the Premier, the minister and the Minister of Finance. It's basically an open letter, and I'm going to read parts of it. Even though it's specific to the city of Hamilton, it reflects the frustration that municipalities have. I'm using it to illustrate the fact that if you're really committed to making sure that Toronto is independent, then they have to be financially independent as well. They're not going to be able to do that unless they have an ability to make sure that they are budgeting

for the services that belong on the property tax base. Unfortunately, we don't have that situation right now.

One of the things that the mayor of the city of Hamilton wrote in his February 1, 2006, appeal to the province of Ontario is this:

"It is a critical time for the city of Hamilton and its residents. City council is in the final stages of preparing the 2006 municipal budget. Choices that are made during the next several weeks will impact thousands of Hamiltonians as well as the economic and social well-being of the city. Unfortunately, the municipality is once again facing a significant budget deficit resulting from the inability to finance downloaded social services. The implications are grave given that according to Statistics Canada, Hamilton has the highest urban poverty rate in the province of Ontario." In fact, if I can make an aside here, the urban poverty rate is actually equal to that of the city of Toronto.

"For several years, the municipal government, local businesses and community stakeholders have been highly critical of the previous provincial government's decision to download social services to municipalities in the late 1990s. Ontario is one of the only jurisdictions in the G8 that funds social services through the property tax base, a formula that leaves funding extremely vulnerable to local economic downturns. Downloading was supposed to be revenue neutral, but for Hamilton this local service realignment has resulted in a significant annual shortfall. Programs and services that assist our community's most vulnerable members are placed in jeopardy while local ratepayers continue to shoulder social service downloading's financial burden."

The letter goes on to talk about the fiscal gap that Hamilton has, which is \$25 million. I believe Toronto's was \$212 million this year. The one in the city of Hamilton is growing. I believe the one in the city of Toronto is growing as well. So the solution that needs to come from this government is a systemic solution to this problem that we have, because it is simply not sustainable for municipalities, whether they be the municipality of Toronto, the municipality of Hamilton or any other municipality for that matter. It is simply unrealistic. It's not sustainable. And it is not adequate in terms of the talk about independence for these municipalities, about giving them greater powers to be more independent from the provincial government when in fact financially there is absolutely nothing they can do to maintain their independence if Ontario does not deal with the problem of social services, public health, drug plans and other social-service-type costs on the property tax base.

In their discussion paper, AMO—the Association of Municipalities of Ontario—speaks very clearly about this same issue. Their concern is exactly the same. What they say quite clearly is that social services do not belong on the property tax base. Income distribution programs belong on the income tax base. It's very basic. They don't belong on the property tax base. Until the government decides to fix that, there's forever going to be a problem with the relationship with municipalities,

because at budget time they are absolutely frozen in time until they hear whether or not the government is going to open the purse strings and help them out, because the system is in fact broken.

I wanted to raise quickly as well, because already I'm running out of time, the other piece of the system that's broken, and that's the municipal property assessment system. I have to tell you, those two things in combination are a double whammy for municipalities. I'm concerned, because I'm not hearing from the government—certainly, I'm hearing, after we put some pressure on, that they're prepared to have a 90-day extension; in fact, we're starting the 90-day extension of the appeal time for property tax assessment. But I've got to tell you, in the city that I represent—and I know the same happened in Toronto—Danforth; people were talking about that as well, so the city of Toronto has big problems with property assessment as well. In the city that I represent, in particular ward 1, which is in Hamilton West, and another area in Hamilton West, which is Hamilton West Mountain, ward 8, have significant and very troubling assessment hikes for the properties in those particular areas. We're talking about situations where people have a 45%, 55% or 65% increase in the value of their properties. They fall off their chair when they open up the assessment and find these horrendous increases.

Further to that, the cost of actually having to make the appeals, and the time and expertise that it takes to make a successful appeal, have been very frustrating. As we all know, the Ombudsman was scathing in his critique of the property assessment system. So it's incumbent on this government to solve another big piece of the problem that municipalities have: the issue of municipal property tax assessment.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other pieces to Bill 53 that need to be raised, but unfortunately I've run out of time. So I'll have to take my seat and thank you for the opportunity to join the debate on Bill 53.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Sergio: I'm very pleased to see the debate, the discussion going very well and in a very positive manner. I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton East and all the other speakers who have addressed the positive side and the benefits of the bill.

I would like to remind the House that we have this tremendous opportunity to move on and give the city of Toronto all the tools it requires, whatever it takes, so they can move on and get on with their work and conduct their business in a very successful manner. For that, I'm very pleased.

Let me say that if the bill has come this far, it's because the Premier has recognized the importance of giving new tools to the city of Toronto, and also has recognized the challenges that the city is facing. With this bill, we are by no means going to solve their problems, but I think it's going to go a long way in assisting the city to conduct its business in a much better fashion. It's because of this understanding that the Premier has

and the minister has, especially with his municipal background and experience, that the city has been supported in terms of millions of dollars in assisting the city, especially with \$350 million in supporting the TTC and another \$365 million coming from the gas tax to the city. It's because of the relationship that the Premier has developed with the city of Toronto that we are better understanding the situation that the city is in and the need to provide necessities for infrastructure. We are very pleased that the city of Toronto has come a long way in working with the Premier, the ministers and the House as a whole. We hope that this will continue and we will see this bill go through as quickly as possible.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It's my pleasure to speak to this debate this afternoon as well.

One of the problems is the government is trying to cover up the fact that it has never dealt with the fiscal imbalance between municipalities and the province. I'm not talking about just the city of Toronto because, quite frankly, I come from a rural riding and one of the problems in the city of Toronto is the fact that spending here is out of control: a 46% increase in the number of people in the city of Toronto making \$100,000-plus a year in the latest revelation issued the other day.

This bill is about more taxation. I believe in the taxpayer. I believe in supporting the taxpayer once in a while. Every time we turn around and try to find another way that we can take more money out of the taxpayers' pocket and give it to government of any kind to spend is not a move in a positive direction as far as I'm concerned.

We're always looking for a way to grow government. This government, with its latest budget—which is, as you know, out of control—had every opportunity to balance the budget, should have balanced the budget, could have, and chose not to.

1720

Now we see that same kind of mentality from this government. They want to pass this on to the city of Toronto, which is, granted, in a difficult fiscal position, but let's take a closer examination of what goes on in this city once in a while, from the mayor's office down, with regard to spending in the city of Toronto. I think you might find that there's some accountability necessary in that regard as well. They should have to operate themselves like some of our small municipalities in rural Ontario have to operate. They should have to live under the constraints of municipalities like the ones in my riding that don't get any of the gas tax money that the larger cities get from this government. This government has refused to support rural communities. But more taxation is simply not the answer. Accountability at every level of government is the answer.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I rise to speak not just as

the Minister of Children and Youth Services but as a representative in this Legislature for the people of Scarborough East. Scarborough East is one of five Scarborough ridings. If you speak with people there, they would agree with members who have suggested that amalgamation was not the greatest thing for some people in Toronto.

I should also hasten to suggest that when some of my colleagues in this House speak of Toronto as “they,” I actually speak of Toronto as “us.” I see Toronto as one of the major economic drivers of this province. I see Toronto as the place where, every year, some 60% of new immigrants who enter this province choose to set up their roots. I see opportunities, I see talent and I see a very significant need for greater respect and greater support and collaboration to ensure that in fact we do have the world-class city that this city of Toronto is capable of being. I see, for example, in Scarborough the commitment in this year’s budget of \$1 million for the environmental assessment to replace an outdated and overburdened LRT. I see underserved areas, as defined by the United Way of Greater Toronto and the city of Toronto: 13 or 14 areas of this wonderful city where communities do not have access to the types of services their young people require.

I am pleased to be a part of a government that recognizes this wonderful city.

The Acting Speaker: Time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Hudak: I’m pleased to respond to the comments from my colleague from Hamilton East, who gave a very interesting overview of the situation that faces the province today and the challenges that municipalities face in the delivery of services. While my colleague from Hamilton East and I will not always agree on how to approach those issues, I think she does bell the cat, so to speak, that the issue is how best to align services between the provincial, municipal and/or federal governments and how to best align revenue sources with that, as opposed to a bill which really, at its heart, brings in a new regulatory environment and brings in new taxes but does not address the central issue that we hear about all the time from municipal leaders, and business leaders in municipalities as well. So I appreciate the member’s comments.

To my colleagues across the floor as well, though, they talk about the City of Toronto Act, which brought together the various constituent municipalities into one city of Toronto. If they found that legislation as repulsive or, as someone described it in this Legislature, as evil or something like that, then undo it. You certainly have the votes to do so. You all say that you oppose the legislation, so put your money where your mouths are and bring the bill forward and undo it and bring back the original cities.

The taxpayers in other parts of the province, including those in the rural parts of Hamilton, I’d say to my colleague, had heard certain promises from the McGuinty government that they would de-amalgamate the Hamilton area. I think they heard this in Kawartha Lakes—“Only if

you vote for the Liberals, we’ll de-amalgamate”—but like so many who put their trust in Dalton McGuinty, they found out that once he had the keys to the Premier’s limousine, those promises, like so many others, went right out the window.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton East has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Horwath: I wanted to thank the members from York West and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the Minister of Children and Youth Services and also the members for Scarborough East and Erie–Lincoln for their comments.

I have to say it’s interesting, because one of the issues that was raised is the extent to which Toronto got its new taxing powers. I can recall when this debate first started, when the bill was introduced last year, I got an e-mail from one of my constituents in Hamilton East, who said, “I’m really worried because I hear this new City of Toronto Act is coming forward and they’re going to give the city of Toronto new taxation powers. I’m really worried because we’re taxed to death in the city of Hamilton and we just can’t afford to continue to see our property taxes increase. I’m just afraid that if our local council gets the opportunity to have further taxing powers, it’s just going to be the end for us. We’re not going to be able to take it.”

It was an interesting conversation, and I think where she was coming from was the concern that is reflected when we talk about things like downloading and inappropriate services being paid out of the property tax base. I don’t think her frustration was so much for the city council and a fear of their inability to make wise decisions; it was coming more from the fact that they don’t have the ability to make those decisions because they don’t have the room in their budget to set them on municipal priorities that should be at their taxing level. Instead, their budgets are burdened by pieces that don’t belong on the municipal property tax base. So that puts the city in a very difficult position, year after year, at budget cycle.

I want to thank the members who had an opportunity to respond to my comments. I look forward to the day that this Liberal government keeps its promise to municipalities by getting rid of the downloading and uploading it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): As a former city councillor for the city of Scarborough, a city that was amalgamated into the city of Toronto, I’m very proud to speak in support of Bill 53.

Let me start by saying that the forced amalgamation that occurred in 1997 failed everybody. It failed the politicians; it failed the citizens of Scarborough and the citizens of Toronto. I will give you some examples. Our Scarborough public utilities had a \$90-million surplus that disappeared overnight. The city of Scarborough had \$115 million in surplus and it disappeared overnight. When the new city of Toronto was amalgamated, it had a debt load of \$600 million that came from the former city of Toronto, East York, York, Etobicoke and the Metro-

politan Toronto government. Today that debt load is over \$2 billion, all as a result of the downloading. Some speakers prior to me said that this government should have taken the initiative and undone amalgamation. But it has gone too far. You can't undo it. It's impossible and it's not going to be cheap if you even tried.

This piece of legislation is a landmark for our province's capital city, the largest city in Ontario and the largest city in Canada right now. Forced amalgamation has occurred. You have to live with it but you've got to fix it. I would have to say to you that the previous Municipal Act, when the city of Toronto was not amalgamated, probably worked well for all of us. But now that the city of Toronto has 2.4 million or 2.5 million people, one size does not fit all. The previous act is not functioning well. The new city needs to have its own control and it needs some powers so that it can move forward.

1730

Many have recognized the Premier and the minister for their leadership, vision and hard work in making this legislation possible. I attended the announcement, when the legislation was going to be tabled in the House, with the Premier and the mayor of Toronto. There were many members of this Legislature there from the Liberal caucus and there were members there of the city of Toronto. To be honest with you, there were members from all sides. They were all supportive and they were all excited. In fact, the mayor of Toronto was very positive about this piece of legislation.

The legislation was done jointly with the city. There was a joint task force that studied all the issues at the city of Toronto, studied how the province related to the city of Toronto. What is in front of us is a result of those consultations between the city staff and the provincial staff.

One of the key parts of the legislation also was consultation with the public. Let me tell you, I was present with many of my current colleagues at the Scarborough Civic Centre, where this consultation took place via the Internet across the entire city of Toronto. The people who participated in that consultation felt they were engaged, that they were given a chance to give input and that everybody was listening. If you speak to anybody right now on the street, they will tell you that amalgamation did not work and that whatever we can do to change the legislation, to give the city the powers it needs to survive and move forward, go ahead and do it.

Our government understands that making Toronto work is crucial to the well-being of our entire province. The City of Toronto Act is an essential cornerstone for the city to realize its potential. It represents both a huge step forward and recognition of Toronto's unique position in this country.

This piece of legislation deals with something that is very important to city councillors. As a former member of the city of Toronto council, I can tell you that many of us were very concerned that, with the change of boundaries at the federal level—the province will have to follow suit because you have legislation that reads the

same—we, the city of Toronto, would have to fall into that same process because that's what the previous government did when it amalgamated Toronto. Let me tell you what they did with the boundaries when they amalgamated Toronto. They actually took boundaries that divided neighbourhoods in half, and a lot of people who lived in those neighbourhoods were very upset. The local council is the political body that's closest to the people. They deal with the delivery of services on a daily basis. They touch lives on a daily basis. It's important to protect communities. When you come along and you draw a boundary right down the middle of someone's community where they have community organizations that look after the well-being of that community, it's very upsetting to those neighbourhoods. I can tell you, in my own riding, as a city councillor, there was a definite threat for that to happen, because in the federal realignment that's exactly what happened. They divided a community and it now has two different MPs, and it's very confusing to the residents.

This piece of legislation gives the city broad permissive powers to determine the composition of its council and its ward boundaries. I'll tell you, that is very, very important to the local council. It also provides the city with the ability to delegate more powers and responsibilities to its committees and boards. A perfect example that will take place with the legislation is that the committee of adjustment's decisions will be appealable to a local body, not to the Ontario Municipal Board. That is a very key part of this legislation. In fact, we should all be very proud of that because it would reduce the workload of the Ontario Municipal Board, and that way, you would get decisions made at the local level that serve the local people. In fact, the committee of adjustment—those who are familiar with local cities will tell you that many developers use that process to get additional things for their development that they normally would not have gotten through the official plan process and the zoning process. They actually use that process to their own benefit. That upsets communities. But now, if you have a local body ruling on that, where residents in the area will rule on committee of adjustment decisions, I think you will get better government.

I am very, very proud of one part of this legislation. I was the chairman of the audit committee of the city of Toronto for four and a half years. I was a key figure and an instrumental person in bringing in the Auditor General at the city of Toronto.

That has been done by a city bylaw. A bylaw can be rescinded by any new council with a stroke of a pen. I am very proud to see that it's now being put in provincial legislation so that the city cannot get rid of it very easily. Many of you, as a result of my work on the audit committee in the city of Toronto, are familiar with what has taken place in terms of accountability.

I have to say I'm really very proud that this piece of legislation allows for the establishment of lobbyist registry rules. The Integrity Commissioner was created by the city of Toronto and now it's going to be in legislation. The other part is that if the city ever wants to

create an Ombudsman's office, which other municipalities across Canada have done, it can do so.

I think the public in Ontario is going to be very proud of this government for the step we are taking here. Let me say to you that many speakers prior to me complained about how we were not doing enough to give the city the tools in terms of financial resources. Look at what this government has done in terms of the TTC. We have actually uploaded what was downloaded in the past. The previous government refused to participate in the operating cost of the TTC after the year 2000. This government is getting back to the table. We have actually given money to the TTC for their operating budget; we are actually giving them gas tax and on and on. I could carry on.

Let me say lastly, though, that while we have made significant accomplishments, we as a government know there's more to be done. As the city moves forward, we will continue to have dialogue with it; we will continue to try and make the process work. The minister has put that in the piece of legislation because we want to have a relationship with Toronto. We do not want to operate as the previous government; we really want to see the city grow. We want to give the city a chance to be recognized as a world-class city, able to compete in the global market in the future.

The colleagues I left in the city of Toronto will be very proud of this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to have some comments on the speech of the member from Scarborough–Rouge River. He was speaking this afternoon on Bill 53, An Act to revise the City of Toronto Acts, 1997.

I think it's safe to say that we all agree it's important that Toronto do well, not just for Ontario but for Canada. Toronto is a beautiful city. It faces some real challenges. It is important for the country that it succeed and be prosperous.

I would question, as our leader said in his speech this afternoon, whether the cart is before the horse, whether we should be looking at efficiencies within the city of Toronto and addressing some of the cost factors in the city before we look at raising new taxes. As the member from Scarborough–Rouge River stated in his speech, it's important that Toronto be competitive with the rest of the world. I would say that putting extra taxes on things like liquor sales and entertainment, and adding more red tape and more permits, is not necessarily the way to make Toronto more competitive.

We need to look at the fiscal imbalance between the provincial government, the federal government and the municipalities, and that applies not just to Toronto but to many small municipalities. I have over 20 municipalities in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka and they all face real challenges. We need to think about them as well.

1740

Ms. Horwath: I'm actually putting my very big, thick copy of Bill 53 back into my binder.

One of the things I found interesting in the remarks made by the member from the Liberal caucus, speaking about Bill 53 for about 10 minutes, is that there's something we can all agree on, and I think it was raised by the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and that is the importance of the city overall. I know that the NDP caucus is particularly helped along in that perspective by the number of members we have from the Toronto area, certainly a good, strong understanding of the city of Toronto, not only in terms of what it does for the broader province in terms of the economy and other features, being the capital of the province, but also, I have to say, the issues raised around the way that the economy is so delicate.

I can recall reading through the Hansards, just to see what some of the other members of our caucus had to say about this particular bill. Interestingly enough, one of the members who joined us just a moment ago, the member from Niagara Centre, spent some time talking about the very issue that was raised by the previous speaker, and that is the concern he heard from service providers, particularly in the restaurant sector, around what added taxes might do to their community's ability to compete and, particularly, to attract tourists. I know that the city of Toronto, through discussions with my colleagues who represent these areas, has had some concerns about declining tourism. Again, we want to be really careful about the extent to which we would encourage anything at all that would reduce competitiveness, particularly in the tourism sector.

Mr. Duguid: I want to thank the member for Scarborough–Rouge River for his comments today. The member has a very distinguished background in serving the public in municipal office, originally in the former city of Scarborough and then in the new amalgamated city of Toronto. He has insight like many of us probably wouldn't have. I happened to have served with him a number of years, and his insights and his vision for this city are something very much worth listening to.

The member knows why we're doing this. Some people may ask why we are coming forward with a new City of Toronto Act. Toronto is operating in an environment right now where they're handcuffed by a lack of autonomy. Frankly, they've been put in an uncompetitive position with other cities their size internationally, and that's why it's important that we provide this city, through this legislation, with the autonomy they need, the flexibility they need, to make the tough decisions they're going to have to make to bring this city forward into the future.

It's also important that they have access to alternative sources of revenue. It's also important that there's an aspect of accountability with regard to this bill. Going back to the autonomy, when you look at things like controlling the setting of hours in bars for liquor licences, when you talk about licensing in general, and when you talk about things like speed humps, when you talk about setting standards for architectural design in this city, when you talk about the ability to delegate authority to committees, when you talk about things like setting their

own ward boundaries, these are things that cities around the world have the ability to do, but Toronto has always had to come to the province and ask for permission to do that. That's not right.

The opposition will talk about the revenue-generating sources as new taxes. What they're not looking at is the ability, because they also complain about the use and the predominance of the property tax for Toronto taxpayers. This bill gives Toronto the ability and the flexibility to offset some of those property taxes with the—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Yakubuski: I'm pleased to comment on the speech of the member for Scarborough–Rouge River on this City of Toronto Act.

We don't have very much time in these little two-minute hits, if you want to call them that, but again, it always seems to be that we want to make government bigger.

Mr. Hudak: They do.

Mr. Yakubuski: The Liberals, of course: "Let's make government and bureaucracy bigger." They're saying we have to find ways to give governments—the city of Toronto is not the council of the city of Toronto; the city of Toronto is the people of the city of Toronto. Why are we always looking for a way to give governments more ways to increase the size of their bureaucracy? Of course, they've gone up by 46% in the number of people working for the city of Toronto who made over \$100,000 a year last year, but what about the taxpayer? You know what? The taxpayer has got a revenue problem. When are you people over here and over there, the rump of the party here and the government side over there, going to recognize that the taxpayer has got a revenue problem in the city of Toronto, as well as in the province of Ontario?

But what did they do when they had a chance to act responsibly? They ran a bogus deficit because it was in their political interest to do so. It's the same kind of mentality when you're looking to go to the people of the city of Toronto and say, "You've got to pay, pay, pay more." That's not the way the taxpayer sees it in this world anymore. They look at government and say, "It's big enough. It spends enough. It takes enough. It has to act in a more accountable fashion."

Across the board, we've got to stop trying to—you know, switching who pays for what is one thing. But stop always trying to hit the taxpayer with more taxes. They can't afford it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. The member from Scarborough–Rouge River has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Balkissoon: I want to thank my colleague from Scarborough Centre, who served on Scarborough council and the city of Toronto council with me, and the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I just want to remind everybody that the first city of Toronto council had 57 members. It was the elected members of the council, who were responsible politicians looking for efficiencies, who actually worked with the provincial government of the day and reduced the council

to 44 plus a mayor because we recognized that 57 was too big and it wasn't working.

I think this piece of legislation will work. I respect my members on the city of Toronto council that I left. I respect the fact that they will continue to do a good job, and I respect the fact that the public that elected them will hold them accountable. They know what it takes to be elected; therefore, they will do what's right for the citizens within their ridings.

I have to say that the city has grown and matured. It's about time the province respected that. It's about time for the province not to treat the city of Toronto like an orphaned kid, because that's how it has been done in the past. It's about time we respect the city. It's in the same league as many large cities around the world. We should allow it to grow and give it the tools to do the job of representing the citizens of that city.

The city of Toronto itself has all the tools it needs. To be honest with you, I think the members of that council will look at the tools we've given them and use them to improve the financial situation in the city and therefore become a real world-class city.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Hudak: I listened attentively to the members of the government side to help me better understand Bill 53. Now, listening to the debate—speed bumps and night closings of bars. If only we give Toronto the ability to, I guess, speed up the elimination or new speed bumps and allow the city of Toronto to set bar hours, then we're going to solve all the problems in the city of Toronto and make it a world-class destination.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): What about the Homestead Act?

Mr. Hudak: I'll be glad to talk about the Homestead Act, some real solutions to the challenges faced by property taxpayers.

But I'm tired of this notion that if only we did something about speed bumps and late night bar closings, Toronto would become a world-class city. It's such a superficial argument I'm hearing from the members opposite. When I hear about the tools, all I hear about is bar hours and speed bumps, and, well, construction design, a more interesting topic.

1750

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: He says it's permissive. But the real issue—my time is going to be split, unfortunately—the real problem, I'll say to my friend from Willowdale, is the growing hole in the doughnut, the exodus of jobs from the city of Toronto to the greater Toronto area, generally to the 905. That's the real issue that should be addressed in this legislation: the hole in the doughnut. It's a real issue. This really should be called, because of the taxation, the weaker Toronto for a stronger GTA bill. Now maybe the Mississauga members here and the Brampton members and the Durham members have convinced Premier McGuinty to further weaken Toronto and put more jobs in Mississauga, Brampton or York. I know the power of the former finance minister; maybe he had a bug in the Premier's ear. But this notion that you

have a business community already heavily burdened in the city of Toronto, which has caused a significant exodus of jobs over the past 10, 15, 20 years, and you're going to put higher taxes on top of them through government policy and Bill 53—how is that a solution to what ails the city of Toronto?

We in the Progressive Conservative caucus want to see Toronto do well. We want to see it as an ongoing engine of growth for our province and our country, the provincial capital, the largest city in our nation. We want it to succeed and we want more jobs to be created in the area, but my goodness, you tell those businesses that have packed up and left for McCallion country, or I listen to the advertisements on the radio for Vaughan, and you tell those businesses that have packed up, "Boy, we're going to get rid of those speed bumps, and council is going to move on speed bumps a lot faster," that's not going to bring jobs here to the city of Toronto. That's not going to help increase the assessment base, for example, that would then make municipal services more affordable in the city of Toronto. Why in the world you would want to chase out even more jobs through increasing taxes in the city is beyond me. I have yet to hear from the opposite side any kind of compelling vision about how Bill 53 or their approach in the city of Toronto is going to make a stronger city or a stronger engine of growth.

We certainly hear a lot about what I guess we would call inside baseball, some mechanics about how often you have to run to the province on speed bumps and bar hours. But unless you address the real issue about taxation, particularly the taxation on business, commercial and industrial classes, chasing them out of the city, this bill may as well be called the weaker Toronto for a stronger GTA act. Maybe that is the secret plan of the conspiring Brampton and Mississauga members, and the member for Vaughan.

There's a lot of material on this that I won't be able to get through tonight, given the time frame, but look at some of the reports: the Toronto Board of Trade, for example, Enhancing Toronto's Business Climate, and A Business Retention and Growth Plan for the City of Toronto, September 2005, a relatively fresh document.

I direct members to page 4: "Compared to other North American and GTA cities, Toronto is uncompetitive. On an international basis, there is a good case that the greater Toronto area offers a positive climate to conduct business. However, once business firms decide to locate in the GTA, one look at the city of Toronto's uncompetitive tax rates all but ensures they will locate in the surrounding '905' municipalities. By many measures, Toronto's property tax burden on business exceeds that in most other Canadian and US cities. Simply put, while the GTA is cost competitive, the city of Toronto is not.

"Toronto's unemployment rate, as illustrated in the chart," on page 4, "has increased from 6.4% in 2000 to 8.4%," in the previous year, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Please tell me how increasing taxes, as Bill 53 does, is going to help address the major structural issue facing the city of Toronto and its ultimate success?

Page 5: "Toronto has among the highest business property taxes in North America.

"Commercial taxes.

"As illustrated in the chart on the right," page 5, "Toronto's office taxes are higher than any other major North American city based on taxes per square foot. Toronto's downtown has the fourth-largest concentration of office space in North America. Uncompetitive taxes, higher than in New York"—the board of trade, higher business taxes in Toronto than in New York—"and triple that in Atlanta," a growing and booming community in Atlanta, "threaten this advantage by repelling business and jobs from Toronto's downtown."

Interestingly, one of the early moves by Dalton McGuinty and his then finance minister from Vaughan, who is conspiring to move jobs from Toronto to York region, I suggest, was to remove the hard cap. The hard cap at least kept the taxes down in the city of Toronto to attract more enterprise, to attract more commercial and industrial assessment, and therefore more jobs for the residents of Toronto—the hard cap in place. One of the first moves by the conspiring Minister of Finance from York was to take off the hard cap to allow business taxes to go even higher. You heard what I said about Atlanta and New York City. Could you believe it? I couldn't believe it. It's what the board of trade says. And the Minister of Finance from Vaughan, conspiring to take business from here to York region, took off the hard cap.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On three separate occasions, the member from Erie–Lincoln has alleged a motive by the member for Vaughan–King–Aurora, and that's specifically prohibited under the standing orders. While he's welcome to have whatever opinion he wishes, to impute a motive to the member is contrary to the standing orders.

The Acting Speaker: I don't find that the member has imputed motive. I'll return to the member for Erie–Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No, I did not, and I appreciate the member's intervention. Coincidentally, a member from Mississauga is challenging my remarks that this bill is going to drive more jobs to Mississauga and out of city of Toronto. He's standing up for his riding, but I'm going to suggest—I won't impugn—that his motive is to support this bill to drive more jobs out of Toronto in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, and he's hoping they'll set up in Mississauga. You can't blame him, but that's what this bill will do, with these higher taxes and Dalton McGuinty's approach on the hard cap, particularly. Maybe he'll raise another point of order, but I think the member's interruption of my speech will reveal that conspiracy by the members from Mississauga, together with the member from Vaughan, to move jobs out of Toronto, which this bill, if passed, will do.

I know my time is running short, and I have many other remarks to bring forward from the board of trade, for example. The JOBS Coalition has concerns as well. Our leader, John Tory, spoke very eloquently earlier this afternoon about his vision for Toronto, a real vision to

make it an even more dynamic city, to attract more jobs and more investment, to attract more people and make sure that when they do arrive here, they will find work in a competitive and dynamic commercial and industrial environment. With a higher assessment on the base, you'll see even greater wherewithal for the municipality to invest in local services, cultural tourism, infrastructure etc.

I know my time is running short. Therefore, at this point in time, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Hudak has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006

SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Bradley, on behalf of Mr. Bryant, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 190, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting one new Act / Projet de loi 190, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant une nouvelle loi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Debate on the bill?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I'll be sharing my time with the member from Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I'm pleased and proud to take part in the debate on second reading of this bill. If passed, the Good Government Act will help ensure Ontario's laws are clear, current and relevant. If passed, the Good Government Act would strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations. This proposed legislation would modernize laws and regulations to reflect technological advancements. It would also clarify outdated and complex legislation. Bills like this one have become a regular feature of the Ontario Legislature, and this approach has become a model for several other Canadian jurisdictions as well. In short, they are a necessary element of good government.

Previous governments introduced and passed similar bills. The first bill of this kind was introduced and passed in 1994. Since 1997, there have been 14 earlier housekeeping bills that were passed by the Legislature. The most recent bill, in 2002, called the Government Efficiency Act, contained 400 minor technical amendments to approximately 60 statutes belonging to approximately 15 ministries. This present bill includes more than 550 items of legislation from 16 ministries, including some 50 changes to the Ministry of the Attorney General. Most are technical changes to existing acts, designed to im-

prove clarity, update names of organizations, rationalize administrative processes and update the language of the law to reflect modern practices.

1800

In some statutes, we are also proposing to modernize terminology to eliminate out-of-date or offensive ideas and language. For example, as a part of a general review of the language in various statutes referring to mental capacity, an amendment to the Interpretation Act would remove outdated and now, frankly, offensive terms relating to mental incapacity.

The Interpretation Act, in turn, defines the terms for use in other statutes as well, and these terms would be removed from those statutes where they appear. For example, terminology in the Real Property Limitations Act and the Trustee Act would be changed. These changes would comply with the Ministry of the Attorney General's accessibility plan under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

By amending the Public Inquiries Act, we would be ensuring that the report of a public inquiry must be released simultaneously in English and French, unless public health and safety require an immediate release.

In addition, we are proposing to clarify the law and certain administrative procedures in unique situations. Proposed amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act would allow disclosure of personal information about a deceased person to a spouse or close relative in very limited compassionate circumstances.

Amendments to the Substitute Decisions Act would allow a guardian of an incapable person to get information about that person.

Still other statutes need to be amended to respond to judicial interpretation of the law. For example, the Execution Act would be amended to clarify that if a car is worth more than the exemption amount of \$5,000, the creditor can sell the car and give the debtor the exemption amount out of the proceeds, as with other assets.

This bill is extensive. That's why we have provided MPPs on all sides of the House with an opportunity to be briefed on the proposals before introduction, and a time to reflect on the information and provide feedback to the government. We wanted to give all members a better sense of the amendments, some of which can be very technical in their nature.

We are introducing this act to make our laws better and to better serve the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Just a few brief comments from the Progressive Conservative caucus. We appreciate the way this legislation was dealt with. This is essentially a housekeeping bill; a "red tape bill" is what we called them in the previous government. We had a Red Tape Commission to try to attack the proliferation of red tape in the provincial government, a commission that was disbanded by the Liberal government when they assumed office.

I just wanted to comment on the process here. We were given, as opposition parties, the opportunity to be briefed by a variety of ministries with respect to proposed changes: the elimination of regulations and so on, and some legislative changes. We made our recommendations and essentially they were accepted, and the bill can go forward. It's regrettable that we don't see more cooperation along those lines.

I want to once again mention that it is difficult—we had a House leaders' agreement with respect to the scheduling of this Legislature which was agreed to by all three House leaders prior to Christmas. People made plans based on that agreement and, regrettably, after the House rose, the government announced, "Oh, by the way, we're coming back early," which certainly created difficulty. I assume most of the members of the government benches were apprised early of the change. But we had a budget delivered in this House when many of the opposition members, because of commitments made based on that agreement of all three House leaders, could not be here, and it's truly unfortunate, whether you're on the opposition side of the House or not, to not have the opportunity to be present for the tabling of such an important document. That's the sort of thing that I think tends to sour the atmosphere in this place.

We saw that activity by the former House leader, Mr. Duncan, last week with respect to legislation related to MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., where we again had a House leaders' agreement; the Minister of Finance got up and performed his little theatrics in this place, calling for immediate passage of second and third readings, despite the agreement of House leaders in terms of when we would deal, the following day, with second and third readings of the legislation and debate it, and had agreed to pass it in an expeditious manner.

That, in contrast to the way this particular legislation has been dealt with, I think is quite stark. I would encourage—certainly I think the House leaders' intentions are for improved relations. I think both the House leader of the third party and myself believe that strongly. But some of his colleagues perhaps don't share that view, and certainly some of his colleagues in the corner office, the Premier's office, clearly don't share that view. Hopefully, that attitude will change if they receive encouragement from others on the front bench and on the backbench, or I think the atmosphere in this place will continue to deteriorate, and that will indeed be unfortunate.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): First, I really want to thank and congratulate the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General for taking a dry, tedious piece of highly technical legislation and breathing life into it with his animated tour through this bill. Here is an experienced courtroom lawyer who certainly knows how to provide colour when it's otherwise bleak, how to give freshness when it's somewhat odoriferous. Although I don't necessarily agree with everything he said, or even

necessarily believe everything he said, I'm grateful that he kicked off this debate with the passion that he demonstrates so often here in the chamber, in committee and, I have no doubt, not only in caucus but when he's standing in front of the Premier at the Premier's desk, aggressively pointing at the Premier, insisting that things be done the proper way. In that regard I understand his frustration and his disappointment, but I encourage him to continue that good work as a member of this Legislature.

This is an omnibus bill; make no mistake about it. It's not the biggest omnibus bill we've ever been confronted with by any stretch of the imagination, but I want to repeat my concern around omnibus bills. It's not a healthy, not a good way to pass legislation. What inevitably happens is that it's like peeling back the layers of an onion: You think you've found the bad spot and sure enough, sure as God made little apples, you dig a little deeper and something else jumps out at you.

So the New Democrats, like the Conservatives, have gone through this bill and expressed concern about any number of sections that we've specifically conveyed on to the government. The bill is going to go to committee. That's a certainty. There are sections that are going to have to be submitted to committee process in terms of explanation, and more importantly, public explanation and public contemplation about the impact. We may well find more stinkers, if you will, in the bill when it's in the committee process.

But I'm looking forward, on behalf of the NDP caucus, to doing that committee work. I know it's going to be exciting, I know it's going to be challenging, and I look forward to the full complement of Liberal members sitting at that committee desk, devoting their undivided attention to this committee work.

I also encourage members of the public to take a look at the bill and to make sure that they gain access to that committee to give that committee their inevitably valuable advice.

So the bill, I trust, will be referred by the parliamentary assistant today after undergoing a second reading vote, but a second reading vote; it still has third reading after the committee work. I look forward to the challenges it poses in that new venue.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr. Bradley has moved second reading of Bill 190.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I refer this bill to the standing committee on social policy.

The Acting Speaker: So ordered.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1811.

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CONTENTS

Tuesday 4 April 2006

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Kayla Cornale	
Mr. Jackson.....	2649
Waste management	
Mr. Kular.....	2649
Border security	
Mr. Runciman.....	2649
Ms. Di Cocco.....	2651
Long-term care	
Ms. Martel.....	2649
Hockeyville 2006	
Mr. Leal.....	2650
Hydro One	
Mr. Miller.....	2650
Crime prevention	
Ms. Marsales.....	2650
Rabbi Lawrence Englander	
Mr. Delaney.....	2651

FIRST READINGS

Highway 406 to Port Colborne Act, 2006, Bill 87, Mr. Hudak	
Agreed to.....	2651
Mr. Hudak.....	2651

MOTIONS

House sittings	
Mr. Bradley.....	2651
Agreed to.....	2652
Mr. Bradley.....	2668
Agreed to.....	2668

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Goreway Drive generating station	
Mrs. Cansfield.....	2652
Mr. Yakabuski.....	2653
Mr. Hampton.....	2654
Jean Lowery	
Mr. Smitherman.....	2652
Ms. Scott.....	2653
Ms. Martel.....	2654

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hydro One	
Mr. Tory.....	2656, 2657
Mrs. Cansfield.....	2656, 2658
Mr. McGuinty.....	2657
Mr. Hampton.....	2657, 2658
Ontario College of Teachers	
Mr. Klees.....	2659
Mr. Kennedy.....	2659
Education funding	
Mr. Marchese.....	2660
Mr. Kennedy.....	2660

Agriculture funding

Mr. Wilkinson.....	2660
Mrs. Dombrowsky.....	2661

Youth employment

Mr. Jackson.....	2661
Mr. Bentley.....	2661

Political contributions

Mr. Prue.....	2662
Mrs. Bountrogianni.....	2662

School boards

Mr. Delaney.....	2662
Mr. Kennedy.....	2662

Cost of electrical power

Mr. Yakabuski.....	2663
Mrs. Cansfield.....	2663

Recycling plant

Ms. Horwath.....	2663
Ms. Broten.....	2663

Energy rates

Ms. Matthews.....	2664
Mrs. Cansfield.....	2664

Court security

Mr. Dunlop.....	2664
Mr. Kwinter.....	2665

PETITIONS

Long-term care

Mr. Arnott.....	2665
Ms. Martel.....	2666, 2667
Mrs. Van Bommel.....	2666
Mr. Jackson.....	2667
Mr. Crozier.....	2668

Public education

Mr. Leal.....	2665
---------------	------

Ontario drug benefit plan

Mr. Hardeman.....	2666
-------------------	------

Special care homes

Mrs. Munro.....	2666
-----------------	------

Community mediation

Mr. Arthurs.....	2667
------------------	------

School bus safety

Mr. Parsons.....	2667
------------------	------

Macular degeneration

Mr. Dunlop.....	2668
-----------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Stronger City of Toronto for a Stronger Ontario Act, 2006, Bill 53, Mr. Gerretsen

Mr. Sergio.....	2669, 2681
Mr. Berardinetti.....	2670, 2673
Mr. Dunlop.....	2672
Ms. Martel.....	2672
Mr. Duguid.....	2672, 2677, 2684
Mr. Runciman.....	2673
Mr. Tory.....	2673

Ms. Horwath.....	2677, 2678, 2682, 2684
Mrs. Munro.....	2677
Mr. Bradley.....	2678
Mr. Yakabuski.....	2681, 2685
Mrs. Chambers.....	2681
Mr. Hudak.....	2682, 2685
Mr. Balkissoon.....	2682, 2685
Mr. Miller.....	2684
Debate adjourned.....	2687

Good Government Act, 2006

Bill 190, Mr. Bryant	
Mr. Zimmer.....	2687
Mr. Runciman.....	2687
Mr. Kormos.....	2688
Agreed to.....	2688

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

2006 Ontario budget, government order number 11, Mr. Duncan	
Agreed to.....	2656

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

Ms. Pupatello.....	2654
Ms. Matthews.....	2655
Mr. Watson.....	2655
Mr. Wilkinson.....	2655
Mr. Peterson.....	2655

Resignation of Auditor General

The Speaker.....	2665
------------------	------

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 4 avril 2006

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2006 sur l'autoroute 406 menant à Port Colborne, projet de loi 87, M. Hudak	
Adoptée.....	2651

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2006 créant un Toronto plus fort pour un Ontario plus fort, projet de loi 53, M. Gerretsen	
Débat ajourné.....	2687
Loi de 2006 sur la saine gestion publique, projet de loi 190, M. Bryant	
Adoptée.....	2688